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THE MODERN CRUSADERS

CAPT. R. E. C. ADAMS, M.C.

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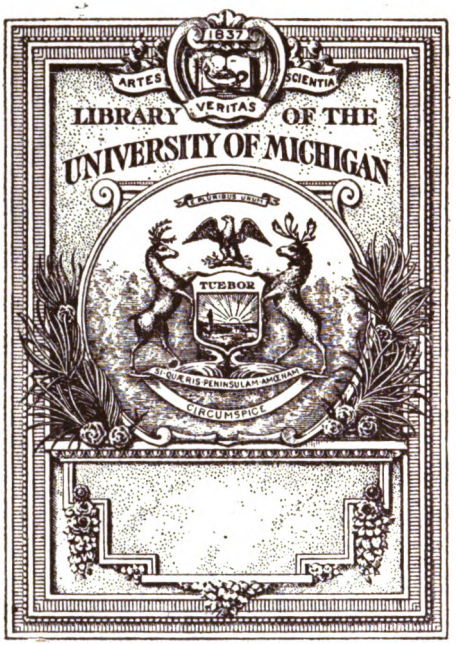

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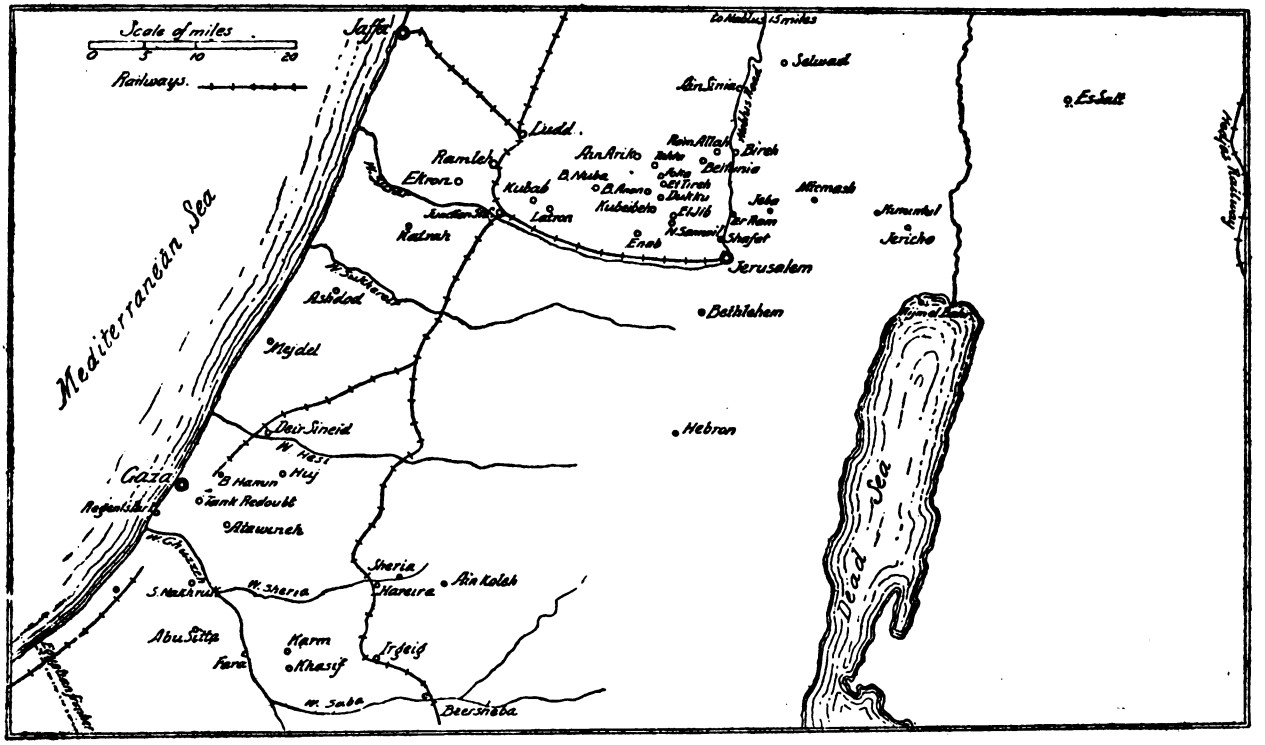
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Beersheba
Ain Arrub
Ain Sinia
Selwad
Es Salt
Birah
Beitunia
Jeba
Mizmash
Jericho
Jerusalem
Shafat
Bethlehem
Hebron
Dead Sea
Sheria
Ain Kolah
Irgeig
Karm
Hareira
Auja
Jordan Railway

THE MODERN CRUSADERS

BY

CAPTAIN R. E. C. ADAMS, M.C.

EAST SURREY REGIMENT

BRIGADE MAJOR TO 231ST INFANTRY BRIGADE

LONDON

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.

NEW YORK: E. P. DUTTON & CO.

1920

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FOREWOR

THE 231st Infantry Brigade, with which this diary is chiefly concerned, came into existence in January, 1917, at a time when its component parts were engaged in the campaign against the Senussi, distributed in the Western Desert of Egypt and the Oases, from Sollum to Dakhla.

Its regiments had previously formed two Brigades of Yeomanry, the South Wales Mounted Brigade and the Welsh Border Mounted Brigade, both of which latter had been dismounted in England in November, 1915. In March, 1916, the regiments of these two Brigades were united in the 4th Dismounted Brigade and sent to Egypt, where they were employed on the Western frontier.

In January, 1917, the 74th (Yeomanry) Division was formed in Egypt, under the command of Major-General E. S. Girdwood, C.B., from the several brigades of dismounted Yeomanry, and the 4th Dismounted Brigade, with its six Yeomanry regiments amalgamated into four infantry battalions, took its place in the Division as the 231st Infantry Brigade.

The only unit of the new Infantry Brigade that had not formed part of the two Yeomanry Brigades was the Welsh Horse, which regiment had been raised by Lieut.-Colonel Lord Kensington, D.S.O., on the outbreak of war and had served under him on Gallipoli.

In February the Brigade moved to Helmieh, a few miles north of Cairo, where the final details of organisation and equipment were completed. All available time was devoted to infantry training and in gaining cohesion between the amalgamated regiments.

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Finally, the Brigade was inspected by the Commander-in-Chief, Sir Archibald Murray, and shortly afterwards left for the Eastern front, where it arrived a few days after the first battle of Gaza.

Preparations were in full swing for the second attack, and, though the Division was destined to lend no more than its moral support to the action, the period of preparation between April 6th, when the Division was finally concentrated at Khan Yunus and Belah, and April 19th, when the battle took place, was one of the hardest that it ever passed through.

In addition to the multitudinous and detailed orders issued preparatory to a general engagement, which kept all ranks busy from morning to night, officers and men were strange to each other and strange to infantry organisation.

The 74th Division was in general reserve to the attack on the 19th, generally known as the second battle of Gaza, an attack that failed through lack of numbers at almost every point. Early on the 20th it was ordered to attack Ali Muntar, the key to the enemy's position, which had withstood all assaults on the previous day. However, to the honest disappointment of the Division, the order was cancelled before it could be put into execution, as it was realised that to throw the only reserve into an already unsuccessful battle would merely add to the heavy casualties that had been sustained, without the possibility of exploiting any success that might be gained.

The action was broken off, and was followed

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by a period of strenuous entrenching against the expected Turkish counter-offensive, which in point of fact never materialised.

From this time onward the months passed monotonously and with little excitement. The Brigade spent seven weeks in the trenches on Mansura Ridge troubled only by the heat and flies, interspersed with desultory shelling.

Sir Edmund Allenby superseded the late Commander-in-Chief in June, and new life was infused into the Expeditionary Force. The garrisons of the front line were thinned out and the trenches largely gave place to detached works. Many troops were thus freed, amongst them the 231st Brigade, which found itself early in July at Regent's Park on the coast, where the splendid bathing rapidly cured the septic sores with which officers and men were infested.

Training then became the order of the day, open order work with no hint of trench duties. This continued right up to the opening phases of the attack at the end of October, and, by the time it was called upon to take part in the operations that led to the fall of Gaza and the capture of Jerusalem, the Division had found itself and was ready to face any eventuality. The men were in splendid condition and eager for action, the officers full of confidence, and the Staffs working smoothly together. In short, the Division was a fit part of as fine an army as was ever trained for open warfare.

The diary opens on October 1st, 1917, when the preparations for the simultaneous attacks on Beersheba and Gaza were nearing completion.

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COMPOSITION OF 231ST INFANTRY BRIGADE

BRIGADE HEAD-QUARTERS

Brigadier-General C. E. Heathcote, C.M.G., D.S.O., commanding.
Captain R. E. C. Adams, M.C., the East Surrey Regiment, Brigade-Major.
Captain Lord Victor Paget, M.C., R.H.G., Staff-Captain.
Captain R. A. Ellis, Montgomery Yeomanry, Intelligence Officer.
Captain R. V. Wilbraham, M.C., Cheshire Yeomanry, Signalling Officer.

24th (Denbigh Yeomanry) Battalion the R.W.F.

Lieut.-Colonel H. N. M. Clegg.

25th (Montgomery Yeomanry and Welsh Horse) Battalion the R.W.F.

Lieut.-Colonel Lord Kensington, D.S.O., Welsh Horse.

24th (Pembroke and Glamorgan Yeomanry) Battalion the Welsh Regiment.

Lieut.-Colonel C. J. H. Spence-Jones, D.S.O., Pembroke Yeomanry.

10th (Shropshire and Cheshire Yeomanry) Battalion the K.S.L.I.

Lieut.-Colonel H. Heywood-Lonsdale, D.S.O., Shropshire Yeomanry.

210th Machine-Gun Company.

Major G. Egerton Warburton, D.S.O., Cheshire Yeomanry.

231st Light Trench Mortar Battery.

Captain S. H. Kirby, Glamorgan Yeomanry.

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THE MODERN CRUSADERS

Oct. 1*st*, 1917. *Regent's Park.*—Wrestled throughout the day with much literature from Division concerning the forthcoming operations; every letter more than the last assumes the form of a cryptogram; they will undoubtedly end by reaching such a state of obscurity as to be intelligible only to a man reading them beneath a crescent moon with his right foot on a dead lizard, his mouth full of soap and straw in his hair.

Victor was rather off-colour to-day, chiefly noticeable at breakfast, when he is generally so fresh that the General has been driven to breakfasting half an hour before the barrage lifts and the rest of us get into line, as anything in the nature of heartiness in the early morning is most distasteful to him.

Oddly enough, the native name for the place wherein G.H.Q. have dumped themselves—having been uprooted by the C.-in-C. from their haunts in Cairo—is, being interpreted, "The House of Dogs." This was unfortunately not

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discovered until many thousands of pounds worth of sandbags and other material had been expended on its beautification, and, of course, it was too late to move then. Presumably Sennacherib had his G.H.Q. there also, and the place was named by his admiring army. There must be some reason to account for these topical names.

2nd.—Set out in a box-car with the General and Victor for a reconnaissance of the Turkish position covering Beersheba, our particular objective in the next show.

The roads, or rather the cross-country wheel-marks that do duty for roads, are perfectly awful. Victor and I, sitting in the back of the car on the floor, were thrown about like peas in a box, and felt the last thing we wanted to do was to go for a long ride when we picked up our horses, which had been sent on ahead to El Buggar.

At the latter spot, consisting of two trees, a small well and a dead ox, we called a halt and waited for the cavalry screen, behind which the reconnaissance was to be carried out, to make good its line. This country is held by Turkish cavalry, and when these shows take place, our mounted troops have to push the enemy's horsemen back and confine them beyond

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the line up to which the reconnaissance is to be carried, namely, the line on which the infantry will deploy for battle.

Two mounted brigades were employed on the job to-day, one of Yeomanry and one of Australian Light Horse.

Having reached this halting-place, the awful discovery was made that we had left our lunch behind, which was almost too much for our waning moral. However, we procured a tinned tongue and some dog biscuits, but even then had some difficulty in tackling it, as we hadn't an eating-iron among us.

After riding on for about five miles, we crossed the Wadi Saba, on which, four miles further east, Beersheba is situated. It is a broad wadi full of round boulders, enclosed between tall cliffs of white stone and earth. The country eastward of the wadi is extraordinarily broken and wild, row upon row of steep rounded hills covered with stones and hard as iron.

Dismounting and leaving the horses a mile or so east of the wadi, we worked forward beyond the cavalry pickets to a hill from which there was a good view of the enemy's works.

I have never seen such a commanding position; the line runs along the top of a chain of hills dominating all those west of them and ap-

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proached over the most difficult country imaginable. The trenches showed up glaring white with the sun full on them; we could see the enemy's mounted patrols retiring through them, his infantry patrols coming out, and a general air of watchfulness and activity prevalent in all the works.

We managed to get much closer to the enemy's line than last time, and succeeded in working up to within two thousand yards before being pulled up by snipers and a few whizz-bangs. There were a great many officers out, and from the amount of movement the Turks probably thought the real thing had begun.

The screen remained out until 8.30 p.m. to enable people to see the ground by moonlight, as they will see it when moving into position for the battle. We reached home about midnight, by which time I never wanted to see a car again.

3rd.—Wrote a weighty report in the morning on yesterday's reconnaissance in conjunction with Victor, an undertaking that was not rendered any easier by our differing on practically every point. However, we were both agreed that it will be a ticklish job for the Brigade to cross the yawning chasms, precipitous mountains and slippery goat tracks

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that form the country east of the Saba. The difficulty will be added to by the approach march taking place in the middle of the night, with nothing between us and brother Turk but our own advanced guard to cover the deployment which must be complete by dawn.

The whole movement will be a very large one. The 53rd Division is to be on the left, ourselves in the centre and the 60th Division on the right with the Desert Mounted Corps on their outer flank.

It is to be hoped the business will be successfully conducted and will not lead to the issue of any more Bowler Hats. There have been a good many going of late. It is said there is a quick-change office at G.H.Q. with two doors through which a constant stream of general officers passes smartly, handing in their brass hats at the first door and emerging from the second each with a Bowler in lieu. Probably this has been found an improvement on the old method of interviewing them at odd hours during the day.

4th.—Took the Signalling Officers of the Brigade to the Big Tree at Belah and assisted at a demonstration of communication with contact aeroplanes. It was jolly interesting, and the pilot descended and gave us a few well-

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chosen words afterwards. Personally I thought he was extraordinarily polite, considering that he had been monotonously buzzing round one spot for half an hour, sounding a Klaxon horn and acknowledging receipt of the letters X, Y, and Z, which seemed to be all the ground experts could produce.

Our office has lately blossomed out into a typewriter again, which has become an absolute necessity of late owing to the terrific number of epi- mono- dia- and crypto-grams that the Division lays before us.

It is also probably a help to the regiments, as Roberts is the only one of our clerks whose handwriting is legible to the naked eye; our Mr. 'Ughes, Victor's clerk, apart from supporting his trousers with two pairs of braces and three belts, has few virtues as a scribe. His real future lies in the department of the C.I.D. where they practise the Bertillon system.

5th.—To-morrow night we leave our pleasant quarters at Regent's Park and move to Apsley House. I devoted a considerable time in the morning to perfecting the march order, as last time we moved, by some mischance the battalions all got off the mark at the same time and the Brigade moved smartly to its destination in column of chunks.

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Colonel Robertson, who commands our affiliated Artillery Brigade, having heard rumours of our typewriter having rejoined, turned up to tea bearing in his hand his well-known essay entitled "Guns, Field, C.R.A.'s for the use of, co-operation with," which he desires to print for wider circulation amongst the infantry.

6th.—The General developed a bad attack of sandfly fever this morning and was quite flattened out by midday; however, he wisely refused to go to hospital, but intends to take a few days' leave when he is better.

This is rather awkward as we have a double move before us, to-night to Apsley House and the following night to Sheikh Nakhrur. The difficulty was surmounted by sending him straight on to Sheikh Nakhrur in a sand-cart, where the Brigade in occupation have undertaken to look after him until we arrive.

We trekked at dusk and reached our destination without mishap, always a matter for congratulation in this country of wadis and no roads.

Victor with the H.Q. transport was less successful; he divided it up into four echelons to avoid a working party that had camped on the starting-point, and in the clouds of dust lost them all.

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He was a little peevish when we suggested he might find some more suitable march formation next time. However, the kit rolled up in time for us to sleep in it. Personally I was very comfortable, as I came in for the General's rush hut in his absence.

7th.—A pretty uncomfortable day. Victor took away our kits in the morning and sent them on to Sheikh Nakhrur, leaving us with nothing to do but sit in an empty sandbag mess and straf flies.

We moved at 5 o'clock in the evening and fetched up without a check, to find the General looking fairly bad and not taking much interest in life.

The bivouac is not a bad one, well up in the hills with plenty of air, but of course very dusty, like every other place in this country now. There is not a spot of green or even brown to be seen anywhere, it is all dust and in this particular spot flies galore.

The camp is just above the Sheikh Nakhrur well, said to be the cavity into which Joseph was inserted by his family. It is a fine well and used to produce excellent water until the doctors got at it with chlorate of lime, but now you can't even make decent tea with it. On the hill above it is rather a superior tomb, where Mr.

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Nakhrur is buried, though nothing but bats and a very ancient smell remain to-day.

8th.—Was occupied all day with operation orders and training programmes in considerable discomfort. Writing under a bivouac sheet with the wind blowing one's literary efforts in every direction and the dust from the paper sticking to your hand is not attractive. There is no office and no mess up here, but the R.E., with whom we always maintain kindly relations, have undertaken to put this right. However, it is rather a come down after Regent's Park, where we had a palatial mess complete with sandbag roof, sea view and *Vie Parisienne* tapestry.

The General has got over the fever and reached the stage where one is merely miserable; but he is going on leave in a day or two and will probably have worked it off by the time he returns.

There is a positive mania for counter-espionage these days, chiefly directed against a gentleman known as Fictitious Frank. Further accounts of his activities and details concerning him have just come in. He is a distinctive-looking individual possessing one green eye and one brown, a grey stubbly moustache, is of foreign appearance and rides an unbranded

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horse. And yet curiously enough we can't catch him.

9th.—A very disturbed night. The General woke up about half-past ten and shouted to me —my bivouac is only a few yards from his hut— to go and shoot a pie dog that was yowling round the camp. I tried to get out of it by saying that I had lost my revolver, which was quite true, it fell out of the holster during the last reconnaissance.

However, the General at once turned out his servant and I was supplied with a weapon with which I wandered aimlessly round the country. Of course, the tripe-hound had pushed off directly the pow-wow began. But when I was getting up, about five o'clock this morning, I saw the animal, a large white one, just behind my bivouac and let drive at it. I made quite a nice group, but the hound is still at large.

Went over to the Belah neighbourhood in the morning with about four hundred members of the Brigade for a Divisional scheme of communication with contact aeroplanes. It was not awfully successful as it was a filthy day with clouds of dust which prevented the observer seeing the infantry at all. The dust grew worse in the afternoon and covered everything in my bivouac, to add to which, as soon as

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the wind got up, the wretched thing was blown down.

10*th*.—The General set off for Cairo in the evening for a week, also Frank Beavan, now my understudy instead of Bim Freeman, who returned to his regiment while I was in hospital. Colonel Spence-Jones came up to Brigade H.Q. and took command. It is a pity the General has to go away at the present moment, as we are just changing our attack formation to bring ourselves up to date with France, and a guiding hand is required.

I noticed this morning that the Dumbell Hill and Mendur works which we dug in such a hurry immediately after the battle last April, are now tenanted by the Mixed Vermouths, the French and Italian contingent who are here to divide up Palestine when the simple Britisher has conquered it.

11*th*.—Rode round with Colonel Spence-Jones to see the regiments engaged in their matutinal pastime of attacking imaginary Turks through clouds of far from imaginary dust. The latter is becoming a great nuisance, the wind gets up regularly at midday and always brings dust with it. Towards evening and in the early morning now it is quite chilly, but the temperature during the rest of the day is splendid, just

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right for campaigning, and I suppose we shall shortly take an active part in the Great War again.

The Division has not held any part of the line since July, which may seem extraordinary, but we are actually in contact with the Turk only from the sea to Mansura, about five miles, and by cavalry patrols towards Beersheba. The rest of the line is thinly held by strongly wired detached posts, and this enables most of the force to be kept out of the line undergoing what the great ones call Intensive Training. Some Divisions which arrived after the last battle have not been in the line at all.

12*th*.—There was intermittent unpleasantness in front of Gaza throughout last night; altogether there has been a good deal lately, presumably to prepare the Infidel for the concentrated hate that will be handed him in a few weeks' time.

The R.F.C. having been largely reinforced succeeded in bringing down a gentleman of German extraction near Shellal yesterday, the first Fritz we have bagged for months.

The last bulletin in *The Times* devoted three lines to the good moral and health of the troops in Palestine, otherwise nothing to report on this front. Some comment might reasonably have

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been made on the discomfort experienced by officers from the overcrowding of the bars in Cairo, for which absolutely no legislation has been made by the military authorities.

13*th*.—Orders arrived for a further reconnaissance of the Turkish estate at Beersheba in a day or so; some means of counteracting the hardness of the floor of a box-car will have to be devised at once.

I found a large serpent sleeping on my flea-bag this afternoon, which I successfully strafed; probably it was quite a good-natured one, but you never know.

Leave to Egypt is being unostentatiously cut down and the dogs of war collected together for the hunt. Leave to England, however, is still open, and one has only to produce a suitable story to the effect that one is the last of the clan Jones whateffer to be granted leave on compassionate grounds. At least that is the impression gained by watching other people's leave warrants pass through the Brigade office, but it is much more thrilling to the interested party trying to obtain leave. The procedure is the same in all cases; firstly the application is returned to be resubmitted on the correct pro-forma, then it is returned for further evidence of compassionate reasons, the police at home are

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then wired to for confirmation, then you are alloted a serial number from which you infer that there are six hundred odd persons to go before you do, then you wait for a month, spent in anxious study of the list of sinkings, and finally you are sent off to the battle before your serial number falls due. If you survive all these tests leave is yours for the taking.

14*th*.—We came across an awfully pretty place this morning while riding round the training area, a deep hollow in the hills sheltering a farm-house with stone arches and an enormous unshaped roof-tree, surrounded by acacias and dams to hold up the water in the wet weather. Quite an oasis in the brown hills all round, and the sort of place one might hunt for unsuccessfully for hours. The odd thing about all these houses is that they never have any windows, which must render the atmosphere very unpleasant when the family is at home, but like all the other houses round Gaza the place was deserted by everything except fleas. I saw a most remarkable sight the other day, six quite respectable British officers standing outside a farm-house waving their clothes in the air and scratching themselves. On enquiry it turned out that they had entered the courtyard and a few rooms to have a look at the architecture and

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before they knew what was happening were covered with fleas. The Turk having turned all the population out of their houses, the fleas, unavoidably left behind owing to lack of transport, have been absolutely starved and leap upon their victims like tigers.

15*th*.—There was another contact aeroplane show this morning which necessitated my getting up at the crack of dawn to see the combatants to the arena, but fortunately it was a complete success, so I shall not have to do it again.

During a conference of Commanding Officers held in our newly erected mess this afternoon to decide who shall win the war, we heard an air fight start overhead and dashed out just in time to see Fritz shot down and fall like a stone. Rae Ellis and Signals rushed off on their horses in search of souvenirs, but there was about as much left of the German as there was of Jezebel.

The R.F.C. seem to be hoisting their slacks somewhat after many months of ill luck, and some quite modern machines have arrived that will give our fellows a chance with the Germans, who have had the pull over them for a long time with much faster machines.

Moreover, a second sausage has arrived on the scene, with its lair on the dunes near the mouth

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of the Wadi Ghuzze—the other also lives in the wadi at Tel el Jemmi. This addition was found an absolute necessity, as the original sausage, being unique, attracted the Austrian gunners to such an extent that they could not let it alone for a minute.

16*th*.—The Colonel and I attended an "at home" after lunch to see a demonstration of wire cutting, a subject which is receiving a good deal of attention at the moment, as the enemy's works at Beersheba are well wired and there is to be no preparatory bombardment beyond that covering the advance of the infantry, so the wire will have to be cut by hand.

There was a large crowd of brass-hats, varying from the Greater Tufted Lieutenant-General to the Lesser Spotted Brigade-Major, complete with all intermediate varieties.

Many strange devices were produced for destroying the entanglements, the most notable being a collection of Bangalore torpedoes. The owner of the latter let off some terrific explosions, which he assured the multitude were highly successful. They certainly were successful in putting the wind up some of the sedate old warriors who were painfully obvious lurking in corners waiting for the bang. It struck me as being rather thoughtless to invite a self-respect-

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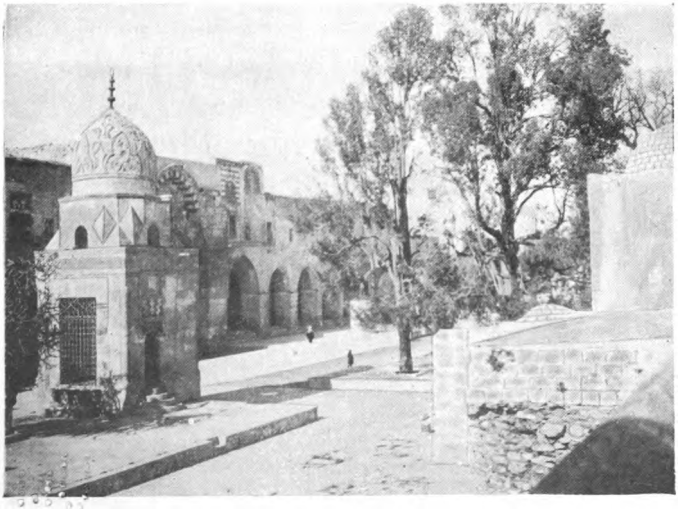
I : Gaza, Nov., 1917.



II : A Fountain in Jerusalem.

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ing old General to a social gathering and then destroying his aged moral by a series of unseemly explosions.

17*th.*—Lord Kensington returned from leave this morning, but refused to relieve Colonel Spence-Jones in the command of the Brigade as he says the General is coming back to-morrow. He was well supplied as usual with the latest information concerning the duration of the war, which is to last only two years more. The only other item of interest is that Fritz sank the bacon ship off Alexandria some days ago, which I already knew as we now have two days a week Machonochie "in lieu," an unpleasant thing to face in the early morning.

Had a good deal of work getting out orders for the reconnaissance to-morrow and several reams of paper from Division, which I made small attempt to cope with as our typewriter has again expired from overwork and our Mr. 'Ughes, the only person who knows how to resuscitate it, is taking a little leave before the battle.

18*th.*—The motor drive was more successful this time. I took the precaution to have three sandbags stuffed with tibben[1] beforehand, so arrived at El Buggar in fairly sound condition.

[1] Chopped straw, substitute in Egypt and Palestine for hay

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The reconnaissance was as usual remarkable as an illustration of the number of officers that can be got on to one skyline and as an instruction in map waving to young officers.

To-day, however, the homely scene was too much for the Turk's patience and he spent the afternoon in promiscuous whizz-banging, while his snipers were pushed out much further from his works and we failed to get as far forward as last time.

I did not at all like the way the shrapnel burst, just grazing the reverse slopes of the hills and beautifully registered. I foresee that some sort of hole will have to be constructed as soon as we arrive in position.

All the final arrangements were made to-day. Brigade and Battalion H.Q. are now definitely decided upon, the line of deployment cut and dried and the wadis named for reference on the map. This is the last reconnaissance.

The return journey was not comfortable. The wretched car kept refusing the whole way, had to be pushed by all hands whenever loose sand was encountered, and finally firing on one cylinder only came to a halt in a drift at El Izraain and left us to make our way home on foot.

19th.—The General and Frank Beavan came

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back yesterday, the former looking none too well, though he says he feels all right.

I believe the Intelligence people managed to provide the enemy with some suitably prepared information as to our intentions when the battle begins, as, of course, the Turk well knows it is going to. During the reconnaissance yesterday a haversack was dropped on one of the crossings of the Wadi Saba containing amongst other things an unfinished letter, a hundred piastre note and a stick of chocolate.

The letter purported to be from an indiscreet officer to his wife, in which he stated that she need entertain no anxiety on his account in the approaching operations as his regiment was detailed for the feint upon Beersheba while the main attack and heavy fighting would be in front of Gaza.

The stick of chocolate and the bank-note were to reward the finder and encourage him to hand over the haversack and letter to the proper authorities.

20*th*.—Orders were received yesterday for the Brigade to carry out Field Firing, so I set off early for the ground at Abu Bakra on the Wadi Ghuzze. It is a magnificent ground for the purpose, consisting of broken hills for the troops to advance over and a line of cliffs at the end

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of the course, along the base of which the dummy trenches are arranged.

I had to put the trenches in order and fix up tins and figure targets to represent machine-guns and snipers. This amusement lasted most of the morning, prolonged by the disappearance of the men told off to fill sandbags in search of unripe water melons at Abu Bakra, a collection of deserted mud huts on the bank of the wadi, which by means of tins and targets I transformed into a fortified village of great strength.

In the evening the Brigade sallied forth and did a night march on a broad front, compass bearings and connecting files and all the usual paraphernalia, in preparation for the unpleasant night when we stagger up under cover of darkness to the jumping off place against the Beersheba works, yclept by the cryptographers the Black Line,[1] I should imagine with sinister meaning.

21*st*.—In the morning the Brigade carried out Field Firing, three battalions in the front line and one in support.

It was about as dangerous an amusement as I

[1] For purposes of brevity, in all orders referring to the impending attack, the line where the troops were to deploy was known as the Black Line, the line of the enemy's works as the Red Line, and the line of outposts to be held after the capture of the enemy's position as the Blue Line.

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have ever indulged in. The General, Commanding Officers and myself directed the attack from three small trenches on the cliff above the targets by means of coloured flags, the advance being held up or allowed to continue according to the colour of the flag displayed in the trench immediately facing it. When the troops arrived near the end of the course we were smothered in bullets from every kind of hand-gun, and the trench mortars made excellent shooting, as I had unwisely erected two water-pipes to look like guns just in front of our trench, which I should have avoided doing if I had known I was going to occupy it.

However, the fight ended without casualties to either side, though the General's periscope and mine were both smashed by bullets. If we can apply a similar weight of lead to the Turk at Beersheba there will be no doubt as to the result.

22nd.—This morning I despatched my servant Bowen to Cairo to fetch my winter kit, and later in the day heard that the march southward is likely to start now at any moment. It will be most awkward if we pull out before he has time to return; one can't expect some one else's servant to be available for any length of time on trek, there is too much to do. Your bivouac has to be pitched and struck every day and

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your valise packed with great precision to prevent the contents falling out when the camel rolls on his side or rubs against his neighbour, to say nothing of the difficulties of washing clothes when there is no water.

An account of Napoleon's campaign in Syria has just been issued, I suppose to awaken our interest in the local war, though the fact that he took Gaza three weeks after leaving Katia [1] and we have been six months at it and are still trying does not show us up to any great advantage. In fact we must be quite the most unsuccessful besiegers that ever sat down before Gaza. Everyone else from the Pharoahs to the Crusaders took it in a couple of days and lived there happily ever after. But things were altogether less complicated then, one simply spent the morning working up to a suitable pitch of fanaticism or intoxication, foregathered round the walls after a hashish lunch and waited for the holy man to fire the Verey arrow. The enthusiasm of the attacker was not allowed to cool under the influence of operation orders and preliminary reconnaissances, but glowed with the promise of well-earned loot and pleasurable atrocities.

[1] A group of wells in the Sinia desert, twenty-five miles east of Port Said.

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23*rd*.—The entertainment is almost due to start now, the opening bars were heard this morning when Victor announced that the mess and area stores had to be returned to the dump at Belah [1] to-morrow. I spent the afternoon cutting down my impedimenta to the required 30 lb.; allowing for one's bivouac tent, valise and flea-bag, this enables one to set out on a journey of unknown length and conditions with one spare shirt and a pair of boots, which seems to indicate that one's ordinary notions concerning clothes are extravagant.

The same applies to the office, which has started an incinerator of its own on which Corporal Roberts is engaged in offering up to the God of Typewriters some tons of useless documents.

Colonel Robertson came to lunch to assure himself that the rudiments of artillery co-operation were not being allowed to slip from our minds, and my afternoon siesta was disturbed by Victor in deep converse with a voluminous A.S.C. gentleman, from which I gathered without really waking up that Mobile Rations and the mythical Unconsumed Portion were receiving due attention.

24*th*.—Much to my relief Bowen turned up

[1] Railhead, on the coast some six miles west of Gaza.

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to-day, having successfully accomplished his mission and done the double journey in pretty nearly record time.

My kit was seized, all except the proverbial toothbrush, and conveyed to the dump at Belah, which I suppose is the last I shall see of it.

The mess has to share a camel with the office, and owing to the selfless journalistic efforts of the Division, comes off distinctly second best. I foresee a diet of bully beef and hard tack in a very short time, unless Palestine proves more productive of milk and honey than it is generally supposed to be.

25th.—To-day is known to the cryptographers as P—6 day, P being used with regard to the concentration of troops southwards toward Beersheba, the actual date when the concentration will be complete not being definitely known, but P day should coincide with Zero, the day of the battle, and I was told by a knowledgeable one from Division that it almost certainly will, in which case we shall be staking our chance again in six days' time.

It is now half-moon and in a week will be full, which is essential for the complicated operation of a long approach march by night and deployment over the worst country I have ever seen. But every detail has been worked out and as

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far as can be seen nothing left to chance. The chief danger, which cannot be remedied, is that the clouds of dust we must make, more visible from the air than anything else in bright moonlight, are bound to catch the eye of any aeroplane there may be in the offing.

We made our first move south after dusk to Abu Sitta some five miles distant, the Brigade marching for practice on a broad front and closed up, exactly as we shall march to the line of deployment the night before the show starts.

The most elaborate precautions were taken to leave our bivouac sites as they were, square holes were dug where bivouac sheets had been —the effect of light and shade being much the same seen from above on a folded sheet or a hole of the same size—sandbag and reed huts and enclosures were erected and incinerators piled up with enough rubbish to keep them going for a week.

26th (P—5 day).—We lay all day in a veritable cloud of dust, without any shelter, as the pitching of bivouacs was not allowed for fear of giving us away to aeroplanes; but the whole Division is concentrated within a mile radius and could hardly escape detection, the only chance being that in all probability no one would think it possible for any human being to live

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in such a vortex of dust and Fritz would most likely put the phenomenon down to some atmospheric upheaval.

In spite of the prevailing unpleasantness paper flowed in at a steady pace from Division, including the Operation Order for the attack, and we had to keep up a similar supply to the Battalions, produced by Corporal Roberts seated in the dust alternatively beating on the typewriter and blowing into the works to remove the grit. I was kept busy all day and am writing this by moonlight before we trek on to Fara, about six miles further east, as there is an embargo on lights amongst other things.

27*th* (P—4 day).—We arrived in bivouac about midnight last night, in the broken ground on the east bank of the Wadi Ghuzze, with Tel el Fara, a steep and solitary bluff, facing us across the wadi.

No bivouac sheets are allowed, no lights and as little movement as possible. Fritz made two visits during the day, but the ground is full of cracks and crevices, every man lives in his own cranny like a lizard, and I think we are safe.

There was continuous firing to the east between us and the Wadi Saba, and during the morning the cavalry screen was slightly pushed in by the Turkish cavalry near El Buggar.

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The 229th Brigade of our Division, which was to have gone forward to take up an outpost line in that neighbourhood to-night, went out in the afternoon and re-established the line.

It will be a bit awkward for us if the Turks seriously oppose our approach to the Saba, as everything turns on our being able to make the passage of the wadi and deploy in the hills beyond it by dawn, so that the attack when delivered next morning will only have some fifteen hundred yards to go.

This evening orders were issued for the march to Khasif, a garden and a few houses half-way between the wadis Ghuzze and Saba, where we shall spend our last night before the battle.

The weather shows signs of breaking, there was rain in the air in the evening and to-night there is lightning in the north.

28th (P—3 day).—A day of unusual quiet, not much dust—though yesterday's promise of rain did not materialise and the heat was as usual—and very little paper.

We sent out our Operation Order for the attack, which I was heartily glad to be rid of. There shouldn't be a great deal more writing to be done now before the barrage lifts.

The liaison officers from the 181st Brigade of the 60th Division, which attacks on our right,

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joined in the afternoon, and will remain at Brigade H.Q. We despatched our liaison officers to the 230th Brigade of our own Division, which goes in on our left.

29th (P—2 day).—A very quiet day with an almost complete lack of paper, which is as it should be, you want a day or two before the show starts to recuperate in.

I went out in the afternoon and reconnoitred the starting-point for our march to Khasif. As I was crossing the Fara-Beersheba road, parallel to which we are to march, I met General Bartholomew, B.G.G.S. of our Corps (XXth), looking at the road. It is an unpromising spectacle, consisting of numerous ruts and camel pads baked quite hard but certain to break up under anything approaching heavy traffic. He asked me who I was and then told me that the Corps Commander (General Sir Philip Chetwode) was prepared to court martial any one found walking on it, as it is the only possible track for lorries and ambulances, and if it gives out we are done. It is to be hoped that those requiring constitutionals will take them elsewhere.

The Brigade moved off at 5.30 p.m., the 230th marching north of the road and ourselves south of it, both brigades on a broad front to economise space.

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30th (P—1 day).—We lay at Khasif, spread out over the bare hills, trying to look like ant-heaps. No bivouacs, no fires and no kind of movement except what is absolutely necessary is allowed, the country here is perfectly open, and the only way to be invisible is to be still.

The final march begins at 6 p.m., just after dusk, when the moon is due to rise; the 230th Brigade being as before north of the road.

The 229th Brigade at this time will be pushing patrols across the Saba and establishing an outpost line on the hills just beyond it.

At 10 p.m. we hope to make the passage of the Saba and at 1 o'clock next morning to be deployed along the Black Line, the battle to begin at dawn.

We shall want every ounce of luck to cross the wadi unharried and some more for the deployment.

I think we were spotted during the morning. Fritz came over and hung about our neighbourhood for a long time, but to our great relief one of our patrols took him on some way to the south of us and after a short fight brought him down. I was never so relieved to see an enemy plane come down before.

9.20 p.m.—We have just had a most successful march, the advanced guard, Knightley's

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company of the 24th R.W.F., is crossing the Saba now.

The Brigade took 3 hours and 20 minutes from Khasif, which is seven miles, pretty good for a night march across country, and we were several times split up by wadis, newly dug trenches and by Advanced Corps H.Q. moving into position on our route.

It was a wonderful sight, the Brigade marching in a solid square in the brilliant moonlight, with a ripple of dust in front like the bow-wave of a ship, rising into a great cloud hanging in the still air behind.

The whole column was only 200 yards in breadth and 300 in depth; the 25th R.W.F. (who were responsible for direction) and 24th R.W.F. abreast in front, in line of companies in column of fours; the 24th Welsh and 10th K.S.L.I. in the same formation immediately behind them; next the M.G. Company, L.T.M.B. and Brigade H.Q.; then the transport, two ranks of vehicles abreast; and finally the camels in subsections abreast, with fanatis[1] covered in blankets to prevent their glinting and the wind properly up the native drivers to prevent their talking.

The steering was all by compass, directed on

[1] Zinc or copper water tanks.

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lanterns, set up by Frank Beavan, who went on and fixed them up during daylight at each point where we had to change direction. This was necessary twice, and was effected by marching the directing flank of the Brigade on to the lantern, halting and lighting another lantern on the outer flank. When the Brigade had squared up between the two it was facing in its new direction.

This scheme worked without a hitch—of course, it had been practised many times before—and we fetched up exactly on the crossing of the wadi allotted us, where we had 15 minutes' halt, got in touch with the 229th Brigade, and the 24th R.W.F. began the passage in fours.

Everything is absolutely silent, except for the slight crunching of boots on the shingle in the wadi bed, which is light as day in the moonlight, and then abruptly the column is engulfed in the complete blackness of a cavernous wadi on the other side—the Wadi Devon which leads up to the position of deployment.

The advanced guard is to deploy behind the outposts of the 229th Brigade and pass through to the Black Line.

11.10 p.m.—The Brigade has cleared the Saba, and everything is quiet in front with the exception of a few rifle shots, which must have been

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fired by the enemy, as our men have orders to use the butt only, the moon being too bright for bayonets.

At 11.40 the Turkish guns fired a few rounds, and the firing became rather heavier and continued spasmodically throughout the night, coming mostly from the direction of the 1070 works, an advanced series of trenches on high ground opposite the 181st Brigade on our right.

At 2.30 a.m. Signals and I went round the battalions, and found all well. The two attacking regiments, 24th R.W.F. on the right and 25th R.W.F. on the left, were in position with battle outposts in fairly good cover, having driven in the Turkish patrols with a loss of only six men and without firing a shot themselves.

Major Dugdale of the 25th R.W.F. had to move his H.Q. on account of the shelling, but no damage was done, and Sigs and I retired not without a little anxiety as to the said shelling ourselves.

We found everyone else in position also, the 24th Welsh in support, the 10th K.S.L.I. in reserve, and the M.G. and Trench Mortar Sections duly hitched on to the regiments they are attached to. The enemy continued his artillery fire at intervals till day. We made no reply

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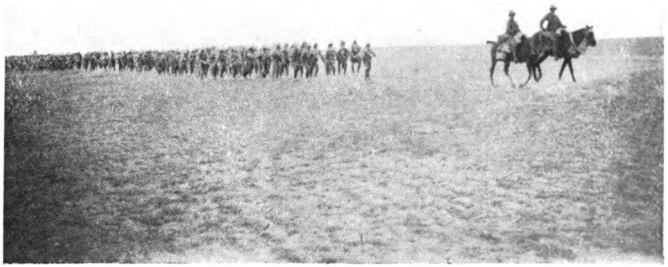

III : The 24th R.W.F. Returning from Beersheba.

IV : In Bivouac at Karm.

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as the gunners were fully engaged in getting into position in Abushar Wadi behind our battalions.

I can't imagine why we haven't had a much worse time than this; it seems odd that we should be able to move about in front of the enemy without his even shelling the crossings of the Saba.

31*st* (Zero day).—The attack on the 1070 works by the 181st Brigade started about 6 a.m., and our people moved forward to conform, the 24th R.W.F. having orders to bring as much fire as possible to bear on the north flank of 1070 to help the London Battalion on their right.

The enemy's shelling became pretty heavy all along the line, but no movement was visible on his works as the sun was rising behind them and all one could see was a skyline wreathed in red mist and dust from our shells.

At 7 o'clock, after breakfast, I went up to the Brigade Forward Station in Kent Wadi with Lefroy, the adjutant of our gunner brigade (268th), where I am now, with the job of sorting out and giving priority to messages from the battalions to Brigade H.Q.

It is a rotten place with four rounds a minute coming in regularly in enfilade and filled with

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the din of our own guns firing "gun fire" behind. There is no cover, but I have four braves digging a trench.

At 6.54 and 7 a.m. respectively the 24th and 25th R.W.F. reported they were pushing forward to conform with the 181st Brigade. They seem to be getting fairly heavily shrapnelled.

About the same time I was rung up by Colonel Robertson, commanding 268th Brigade R.F.A., who informed me that owing to bad visibility artillery fire would slow down, the rate to be increased again as soon as possible. Passed this on to the attacking battalions.

Shelling considerable in this neighbourhood.

8.5.—Line dis to Brigade H.Q.

8.10.—Went to the top of the hill to look at the situation, but could only see 1070, where there is not much movement.

Considerable movement of our own troops straight in front.

Message from 25th R.W.F.: "Progress slow. Casualties from shell fire fairly heavy. Am I to push on or await more artillery support."

From 24th Welsh: "My last two platoons now moving up to position of deployment of leading battalions."

8.21.—From 24th R.W.F.: "We are having

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very heavy casualties from shrapnel. No report from companies as to position."

8.30.—Line to Brigade H.Q. through again.

Passed on message from the General to battalions that 181st Brigade report wire will be cut by 8.30.

Lefroy says all lines to F.O.O.'s are cut, and one F.O.O. shot through both legs.

Supporting batteries firing rapid again.

Sgt. Briscoe (in charge of Signals at Forward Station) reports work on telephone slow on account of din.

9.0.—By telephone from Colonel Robertson: "60th Division have taken 1070. Consolidation now proceeding." Repeated the information to battalions.

9.5.—Partiality of enemy gunners for this wadi still noticeable. Line to 268th Brigade dis.

9.20.—Message from 24th Welsh stating enemy guns causing considerable trouble suspected in H.5.d. Action by Lefroy.

9.30.—Lefroy informed by Colonel Robertson that 60th Division have taken Z.9 work (on the main line behind 1070). Informed all battalions.

Whizz-bang almost in our scratch. Sent away the excavators, as they say they can make no impression on this soil.

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9.47.—Another F.O.O. reported wounded.

From 24th R.W.F.: "24th London report they have taken Red Line" (enemy's main line).

25th R.W.F. report they are pushing their H.Q. forward.

9.50.—Wire from Brigade H.Q. to battalions: "No wounded men who can walk to leave their equipment behind."

10.0.—Went to top of hill to observe 181st Brigade on 1070 and main objective. Cannot see our own objective (Z.6 and Z.7 works). Enemy shelling heavy on our front, and on 1070 and main line behind it.

From Brigade H.Q. to 25th R.W.F.: "Do not lose touch with 10th Buffs (of 230th Brigade)."

10.40.—Dispositions of 24th Welsh from Colonel Spence-Jones by telephone, "Right company about 600 yards from enemy trenches. Left more or less conforming. Battalion still in support, except three platoons in action on left."

Got Artillery situation from Lefroy:—44th Brigade about to move forward to cut wire. 268th Brigade firing on our objective (they had previously been assisting 181st Brigade).

11.5.—From Brigade H.Q. to 24th Welsh: "Counter batteries engaging battery annoying you. Report how this affects you."

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11.15.—Lefroy states 44th Brigade now engaged in cutting wire. Wired units and asked for results.

From Brigade H.Q. to 24th and 25th R.W.F.: "Gunners report perfect registration of our objective. Expect best possible support of your attack. Hug the barrage."

11.20.—Situation report from 25th R.W.F. giving position of firing line and asking for reinforcements to press home attack.

11.35.—From Brigade H.Q. to 24th and 25th R.W.F. and 24th Welsh: "Second phase (i.e. our attack on the enemy's main line, covered by all available guns) to start 11.45 approx. Be ready to move."

11.45.—From 25th R.W.F.: "More artillery fire required on enemy redoubts. M.G's active in north part of Z.7. Casualties heavy near there."

From Brigade H.Q. to 24th Welsh: "Send one company to reinforce 25th R.W.F."

11.58.—Instructions from Brigade H.Q. to 25th R.W.F. to correct direction when attack commences.

12 p.m.—From Brigade H.Q. to all battalions: "Second phase will commence at 12.13 p.m."

From 25th R.W.F.: "Wire not cut on north part of Z.7. Left company held up by heavy artillery fire.

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Lefroy rang up Colonel Robertson, who says heavy counter-batteries have been dealing with enemy guns for twenty minutes. Bombardment of north part of Z.7 has been ordered and wire-cutting is in progress.

12.15.—Went forward to the high ground beyond the line of deployment to see the final phase.

About 12.25 I saw troops of the 181st Brigade assault Z.8, the next work to the right of our objective, rush the trenches and disappear over the crest behind them.

At this time our leading battalions, reinforced by the 24th Welsh, were lining the last ridge in front of the enemy's trenches, still under considerable shrapnel and M.G. fire. Our own shells of all calibres were falling fast on Z.6 and Z.7, and gradually the fire intensified till the enemy's works were simply a line of black smoke, dust and bursts of flame.

I could see our men continually moving up to the firing line and lying down. Then the barrage stopped suddenly; the line got up, moved steadily forward and disappeared into dead ground, finally to reappear swarming with glint of bayonet up the side of the hill beyond, into and over the white line of the enemy's trenches.

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1.15.—Got back to the Forward Station. Gun fire has died down to almost nothing, with spasmodic rifle fire from the enemy's line north of our objective, where the 53rd Division are in observation but have not yet attacked.

Orders came through for the 24th Welsh to reorganise and pass through the leading battalions to the Blue Line—the line of outposts to protect the captured position.

Sigs joined me in the Forward Station and at 1.30 I rang up the General and obtained leave to go forward and have a look round.

It took us some time to get up to the works, the ground being extraordinarily rough and broken, a series of climbs from one hill-top to another. Our dead and wounded were scattered over most of the area, the enemy's shrapnel having been extremely accurate in sweeping the reverse slopes of the hills and even the bottoms of the wadis, always in enfilade.

They must have registered the ground beforehand with the most meticulous care.

Nearer the trenches were lines of men cut down by M.G. fire, most thickly on the last ridge in front of the works, where we found poor Fitzhugh of the 25th R.W.F. shot through the head. I felt very sorry for the wounded with no cover from the intense heat and glare, and

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several asked us for water, which, of course, we gave them.

The 24th Welsh had passed through to take up the outpost line beyond, but we found the 24th and 25th R.W.F. on the works marshalling the prisoners and fetching water from the Turkish camp on the other side of the hill, but most of them were lying on their backs recovering from the effects of the heat and of having to carry their packs through an exhausting day.

Beersheba was visible below us, lying in a hollow two or three miles away, shimmering in the heat.

Z.7., which seems to have put up the stoutest resistance of any work in the system, is a most forbidding place, a rocky sugar-loaf hill, with a belt of wire half-way up and sides sloping so sharply that one couldn't possibly run up them. But there is an almost equally steep hill down which the attack came, and dead ground at the bottom where they were able to form up for the charge and cut the wire, which had not been much affected by the artillery wire-cutting.

The trenches themselves, cut in the solid white stone of the hill, were much battered by shell-fire and choked with debris and dead Turks lying one on top of the other, covered with bayonet wounds.

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Sigs and I got back to Brigade H.Q. about 3 o'clock and fortified ourselves with tea and bully, while Rae Ellis and the interpreter interrogated bunches of depressed Turks.

At 7 p.m. the Wadi Line, a continuation north of the Saba of the trenches we have just taken, was attacked by the 230th Brigade, who swung up their right and attacked the line in enfilade from the south bank of the Saba, while the 158th Brigade of the 53rd Division attacked frontally from the west. But the Turk did not wait to be taken in front and flank simultaneously, and when the attack had made some progress he was found to have evacuated the position.

After dark Brigade H.Q. got on the move, the General having decided to make for Hawke Wadi, just beyond the old Turkish trenches, in order to give some instructions which had just come in from Division to the battalions as we passed through them.

There was a track marked on the map, which had formed the dividing line for the attack between ourselves and the 181st Brigade, in which it had been most useful, but as an aid to movement it was disappointing, and I don't know how the camels and more particularly the wagons ever got over it. It took us about

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four hours to reach the trenches, and an uncleared battlefield is not a cheery place to hang about in on a moonlight night.

The battalions were lying on and around the captured position, sleeping the sleep of the just in spite of the cold, which is very noticeable after the close nights on the plain, and they displayed no real pleasure at having to be on the move again.

However, about midnight the 24th Welsh and 10th K.S.L.I. crossed the Saba east of the Wadi Line of trenches and took up an outpost line facing north, the other two battalions moving up in support.

We moved on to Hawke Wadi, halting on the way above the bivouac of the late garrison of Z.7 in a deep wadi, the General having heard a rumour that geese had been seen there.

I went down with Rae to have a look round. There was all kinds of stuff thrown about among the tents and bivouacs, rifles, stores, food and all manner of camp furniture. In one bell-tent there was an ex-Turk lying with a bayonet through him, and in another shelter I found a little Arab pony, with a slight shapnel wound in his quarter. I roped him in without delay; just outside was a very good M.G. pack-saddle, which had probably been part of his equipment,

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so now some one else can have my tenth part of a camel.

The geese were quite mythical.

After sundry wanderings and divagations into tents full of half-packed hand-bags and highly coloured shirts—it is a mistake to think the Turk has no taste—we reached our destination, fell into our flea-bags and slept.

Nov. 1st.—The day passed peacefully, the battalions being withdrawn from the outpost line and concentrated on both banks of the Saba.

The only drawback, due to these wadis having served the Turks as dwelling-places, is the enormous number and extreme self-confidence of the flies, which combined with the heat and lack of water make existence fairly uncomfortable.

In the morning Rae and I rode along the Saba, a magnificent wadi with towering stone cliffs, and—more important—water pools, where we watered our horses and washed ourselves. Some two miles along it, we came to Beersheba, a small town, but containing good houses, and, of course, the famous wells. There are no mud huts and everything is built of white stone quarried from the wadi. The streets have sidewalks and in the middle of the town gardens are laid out, hard by the mosque, which is quite

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a fine building with a paved court and coloured glass windows.

The Turkish H.Q., in a big stone place with steps leading up to it, had been hurriedly evacuated, and the floor of the building and the street outside were littered with papers and despatch boxes.

There was a train in the railway station, all of the coaches loaded with explosive for our benefit, but the leads had been spotted and cut.

The German H.Q. were in a very pretty house with a fountain in front of it, but, as usual, they had cleared out lock, stock and barrel in plenty of time, and I have not heard that the cavalry caught any of them, though they took 1200 Turks and 12 guns.

Our returns for yesterday are just in; the total casualties of the Brigade were 16 officers and 499 other ranks. Twenty officers and 315 other ranks of the enemy were taken prisoners, and a large number killed.

2nd.—In the afternoon the Brigade moved about three miles north and went into bivouac at the north end of the Wadi Line.

We passed large dumps of captured material on the way, on which we were ordered to drop a guard, several batteries of German .77's and a lot of donkeys and horses.

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The XXIst Corps have taken the front system of trenches all round Gaza, and are right round the town by Sheikh Hassan on the seaward side.

To-morrow or next day, we shall be up against Abu Hareira, the system which protects Gaza from the south, by report a considerable stronghold.

3rd.—At 6.30 a.m. the Brigade moved some four miles north towards Sheria, marching for some way along the metre-gauge railway that linked Gaza and Beersheba.

We halted before midday in a position of assembly, from which it was understood we should move on shortly. The 10th and 53rd Divisions and the Desert Mounted Corps in front of us are in action with the Turks, who are apparently falling back slowly.

The XXIst Corps have made further progress between Gaza and the sea, so the Turks will have to look to it if they are to get away.

Eventually we remained in the same place all day, rolling stony hills all round, dust and grit flying so thick that you could not see a yard, and a khamsin [1] wind blowing the whole time.

Very uncomfortable on half a gallon a day, the horses only being watered once daily.

[1] Hot south wind.

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Fortunately a Bedouin was taken in the morning who showed us a well with a good supply of water, so this evening we not only had plenty to drink but inserted a wash and shave into the programme as well.

4th.—Orders came in the morning to stand by to move at a moment's notice; everything was packed up and complete discomfort reigned, added to by Fritz who came over and dropped bombs. One fell on the Trench Mortar Battery and caused a good many casualties, and the gunners got one in their mess.

Just as we were thinking of lunch a reconnaissance was ordered, so we set out, the General and Commanding Officers, Rae and myself, to look at the country leading up to the Sheria defences, which it seems we are to take on in the near future. For the moment what is holding us up is the water difficulty, as it all has to come from Beersheba, over eight miles of barren and stony hills in fanatis carried on camels. In the hills themselves, known as the Arab el Teiaha, there is no water except in one or two isolated wells, nothing like enough to supply the two divisions operating there, ourselves and the 53rd.

The latter have apparently been suffering a good deal from lack of water, and have been trying for the last three days to take a well called

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Ain Koleh, away to our right, which the Turks are very loth to part with.

We spent the whole afternoon in the outpost line of the 53rd Division, endeavouring to identify features of the landscape with those of a very inaccurate map. The country before Sheria is grass land, cultivated to a certain extent and not so arid and stony as the hills we are in. Some miles eastward is a long range of mountains running north and south culminating in a very high peak called Towal abu Jerwal, a landmark for miles around.

Rae and I found ourselves detached from the others on the reconnaissance, and when we returned discovered that the Brigade had moved, so we had to go on to Divisional H.Q. to find out where it had gone to. We also thought they might part with a cup of tea while our horses were feeding, which they eventually did, having taken the last remaining water from our bottles to put in the kettle.

The Brigade had moved up to the neighbourhood we had just come from—they were spotted on the way and came in for a good dose of shelling—with orders for one battalion to take over part of the outpost line from a battalion of the 53rd Division, the others to remain in support and reserve.

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It was very dark by the time we caught them up, covered by which the support and reserve battalions collared the wadis in the map-squares allotted to the 230th Brigade, and I spent half the night being rung up by Buxton, their Brigade-Major and asked to move out. But protected by the hopeless inaccuracy of the maps of this part of the world, we held our ground, and are still on the conquered position.

Past our H.Q. runs the track along which those Turks who managed to get away, retreated from Beersheba to Hareira; the wadi crossings were too much for a good many of their wagons and limbers which now decorate the landscape.

5th.—We remained during the day, harried intermittently by shelling from the N.W. which I think did no harm beyond hitting one camel.

The khamsin is still blowing and things are not made more enjoyable by an order just issued by Corps to the effect that washing and shaving are forbidden, so that even if you do have the luck to come across a well you dare not indulge in a wash because everyone else is so dirty you would be given away at once.

In the evening orders came for the attack on the Sheria works and the capture of Sheria and its water-supply to-morrow.

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Having taken the Beersheba defences we shall be able to tackle the Sheria line from the flank, which should be fairly plain sailing.

The Division is to attack in echelon, as the enemy's line taken in enfilade will offer only a small frontage, consisting as it does of a series of small works prepared for all round defence. The 229th Brigade is to lead, with the 230th echeloned to the right rear and ourselves echeloned back again, as we had the heaviest fighting outside Beersheba.

The attack is to be made westward, and when we get well on the 60th Division is to attack from the south, cross our front and capture Sheria. Our right will be protected by the Yeomanry Mounted Division which is to fill the gap between us and the 53rd Division to the north.

6th.—We reached the wadis selected for deployment about midnight, or rather some of us did. Brigade H.Q., two battalions and the M.G. Company got into position, but of the 24th Welsh and 10th K.S.L.I. there was not a sign. The latter had just been relieved in the outpost line to the north, and were to make the rendezvous independently, but got entangled in the wrong wadi and failed to appear.

The 24th Welsh admitted afterwards to having

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spent a very quiet night in front of the outpost line.

I passed the small hours quartering the country on my horse and returned after a fruitless search to Brigade H.Q. to find the General in a state of some anxiety at the diminution of his army.

Of the two battalions with us, the 25th R.W.F. were on outpost duty and could not be moved till the mounted Yeomanry passed through them in the morning, so that our striking force consisted of one battalion and the M.G. Company.

However, at dawn when the attack started, the K.S.L.I. were located and came into reserve, though they should have been in the line; the 24th Welsh fell into their position as right flank guard and the situation was restored.

The battle went very fast from the start, and we were on the move nearly all day. The 229th Brigade took the Sheria works in enfilade and in spite of a very stubborn resistance overcame them extraordinarily quickly, while the 230th mopped up the outlying works of the system.

All the fighting in our brigade fell to the 24th Welsh, who had first to engage work V. 47, the most easterly of the enemy's defences, from which considerable opposition was experienced, but the attack was rapidly pushed home and the

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work was carried together with a number of unwounded prisoners and two British Lewis guns (captured by the Turks at the second battle of Gaza in April).

The battalion pressed on immediately, throwing back the enemy's rearguard, and seized the high ground commanding the Wadi Sheria from the south. They held this ground throughout the afternoon although counter-attacked several times and exposed until dusk to continuous shell fire from enfilade. The right flank, which suffered most severely, was eventually withdrawn to a ridge about a hundred yards in rear, necessitated by the repeated attempts of the enemy to work round it, and in its final position was covered by the 6th Mounted Brigade.

The 24th R.W.F. meanwhile had taken over three Turkish works from the 230th Brigade, situated on high ground from which you could see the enemy clearing out of Sheria towards Hebron. They left many dead in the trenches, mostly bayoneted, and numerous cavalry men in the open country. A number of guns were taken, including a battery of 4.2 Hows and a considerable quantity of M.G.'s and their equipment.

In the evening the Brigade swung round from N.W., in which direction opposition had ceased,

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and held an outpost line facing N.E. towards the Turks opposite the 53rd Division, who yesterday captured Khuweilfeh and the much disputed wells at Ain Koleh.

During the night the 60th Division took Sheria, which will ensure a good water supply for us.

Brigade H.Q. was fixed in the evening in a tributary of the Wadi Union, in which a well was discovered 105 feet in depth, of which we had great hopes. But when a sample of water had been produced after fastening together every available piece of rope, it was found to be so sulphurous that even the camels would not face it. In the sides of the wadi are big caves full of Bedouins, from whom we purchased half a dozen of the smallest and toughest chickens known to history.

7th.—The battle was continued in the morning by the 60th Division, who pursued the enemy beyond Sheria and out of earshot as far as we were concerned.

The Desert Mounted Corps—3 Cavalry Divisions—passed through the gap made by us yesterday and went for Huj to cut off the garrison of Gaza. At midday we had the great news that Gaza had fallen, together with Hareira, stormed by the 10th Division, and that two divisions of

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the XXIst Corps were pursuing northwards along the coastal plain.

The only Turks now holding their ground are those facing the 53rd Division at Muweileh; possibly they may not know the fate of Gaza, as we have the cavalry between them and the rest of their army. In any case they must fall back soon or be captured.

One of our patrols this morning found a large native village in caves in the Wadi Sheria; in one cave were over a million rounds of Turkish S.A.A. and about seven hundred rounds of gun ammunition, also a further supply of chickens.

The natives are very friendly and say that the tribes are all waiting their opportunity to rise and fall on the Turk. The Sherif of Mecca is said to have arrived at Diariyeh to the N.E. with a horde of braves, and to be making himself a great nuisance to the enemy's rearguards in the hills.

In the afternoon we had orders to move our outposts 1500 yards N.E. with the Yeomanry on our right, and the 230th Brigade on the left.

The General and I went out to see the line taken up, which was accomplished without any difficulty before dark. The ground in this neighbourhood is covered with dead Turks, slain by

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the 24th Welsh yesterday, who had about 180 casualties themselves in the action.

This evening the guns which were enfilading us from the east all day, seem to have been removed, so I suppose the 53rd Division are pushing on.

The embargo on shaving is producing some funny effects, everyone has a beard about an inch long, and a conference of respectable field-officers looks like an anarchist meeting.

8th.—With the exception that the outpost line was pushed further N.E. we made no move during the day. Sounds of fighting grew more and more faint and finally there was complete quiet. In the evening whilst visiting the line with the General we saw twenty-two of our aeroplanes going over to drop bombs on the enemy, a fine sight.

Not much news has filtered out here, except that the XXIst Corps have reached the Wadi Hesi, which runs into the sea north of Gaza.

It is rumoured that the Tank[1] Redoubt and Atawineh are still holding out, but with a wedge past them on both flanks I shouldn't think that could be true.

[1] So called because the Turks built the redoubt round a British Tank knocked out during the second battle of Gaza. Both the Tank and the Atawineh redoubts were on the south side of Gaza

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9th.—The clearance of the battlefield which was started yesterday was carried on by all battalions, and further dumps of gun ammunition were discovered in caves, as well as an enormous amount of all kinds of equipment scattered broadcast over the country.

Huge clans of natives, headed by very ancient and verminous patriarchs, keep descending on our H.Q. with complicated and untruthful tales of camels stolen from them by the Turks, and other inventions designed to excite sympathy.

At midday came the surprising order to move back to Irgeig to-night. No one has any idea why we are retracing our steps. The two most popular theories are that the supply question is becoming too big to be dealt with; the alternative that the Turks continue to hold Atawineh and we are going back to push them out.

The 10th Division has also gone back to Karm, but mystery enshrouds the reason for the withdrawal of both divisions at a time when we expected to be making all speed for Jerusalem.

The march, about six miles, started after dark, as the orders were that no move was to be made until the battlefield had been cleared, which was a long job.

10th.—Irgeig used to be a station and supply centre of some importance on the Beersheba

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railway, but consists now of broken bridges—over the Wadi Irgeig—and destroyed track.

The Brigade marched through the village in the early morning, and thence via Imleih and El Sebil to Goz el Basal, which is the very place we had as a starting-point for our march to Khasif on the way to Beersheba.

It was a filthy march of about twelve miles, the three brigades of the Division marching abreast across country in an impenetrable cloud of dust with a hot wind blowing from the south.

We had an hour's halt near Imleih at midday, where there was a well with a little water, at which I managed to get one of my two horses watered.

When we were approaching Karm and Goz el Basal—which being interpreted means the Sandhill of the Onion—the whole plain was one thick dust-cloud like a London fog, with troops feeling their way through it in every direction. Everybody had the greatest difficulty in getting into their bivouacs in spite of their having been previously marked out by advanced parties.

11*th*.—The khamsin continued all day, and the dust cloud, through which the sun shone dimly, never abated. It is a worse spot than the plain of Belah ever was.

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We are apparently brought back because they cannot supply two corps on the advance. The XXIst Corps are pushing on, and are twenty miles beyond Gaza with the cavalry in front of them. We shall most likely relieve them as soon as arrangements can be made to move us forward.

The branch of our railway which was run out towards Beersheba during the late operations now passes through Karm, and plenty of water is brought up in tanks. There is also a canteen, and if you are prepared to sit for twelve hours on the doorstep you can purchase quite a good packet of cigarettes and even a tin of fruit.

12*th*.—The south wind dropped during the night and with it disappeared the dust which has made the last three days so unpleasant. This morning it was possible to wash without collecting more dust than you get rid of. I was most annoyed to find a jerboa [1] had eaten a large portion of my great-coat last night and made a clean haul of one of my socks. One's wardrobe is too limited to stand such strains upon it.

13*th*.—It is now certain that we are out of the hunt for the time being, until the railway is constructed far enough up the coast for it to be

[1] Kangaroo rat, very common in Sinai and Southern Palestine.

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possible to feed us. I think only the 52nd and 75th Divisions of Infantry are following the enemy with the cavalry. Of the remainder, the 54th Division are somewhere north of Gaza, the 60th about Huj, the 10th and ourselves at Karm and the 53rd still in the hills making for Hebron.

14th.—The cavalry reached Ramleh, in the plain about level with Jerusalem to-day, and the infantry captured Junction Station, in the Wadi Surar, where the Jerusalem-Jaffa railway crosses the line running north and south.

Up to the present, some seven thousand Turks and eighty guns have been taken, while the remains of the enemy's 53rd Division have been driven on to the Hebron-Jerusalem road, from which they can only retire eastward into the mountains and starve or make north and be captured.

15th.—We had a warning order to-day that we shall be moving soon, back to the neighbourhood of Gaza, and no one will be sorry to escape from this beastly place. The flies are perfectly awful; most of them we brought with us from the Turkish lines, which are black with them.

When you trek from a camp all the flies cling to the men's backs and the camels' loads, and though you may arrive in a perfectly clean bivouac it is full of flies as soon as you get there.

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16*th.*—The brigade paraded in the morning and the General presented several Military Medals which we have collected quite a number of, together with several D.S.O's and Military Crosses, to say nothing of a potential V.C. for a sergeant of the 25th R.W.F. who slew fifteen Turks with his bayonet at Beersheba.

The wind swung into the south again, and the heat and dust combined to make life very unattractive.

17*th.*—We moved during the morning to Shellal, on the west bank of the Wadi Ghuzze, a short march of four miles, but making up in dust what it lacked in length.

Where we crossed the wadi it is about a mile wide, including the broken ground on either side of the actual bed. There are some large pools in the middle, one of which was the home of two prosperous looking moorhens. I tried to secure them for lunch, but though they were quite tame and let me approach within ten yards, I failed to bag either through trying to bring them into the same line and get both with one shot.

Our bivouac area was remarkable only for the enormous multitude of large blackbeetles living there. I have never seen so many in one place before or had to eject so many from my bed.

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Orders for to-morrow's march came very late from Division, and were complicated by our being timed to pass through the 230th Brigade's bivouac before they could possibly have evacuated it themselves, which necessitated my going over to their camp and interviewing Buxton on the subject.

18*th*.—We moved at 6.30 a.m. about twelve miles along the Wadi Ghuzze to the Red House, a couple of miles from the sea, and four from Gaza. Contrary to expectation it was quite a comfortable march, as there was no sun, and we made such quick time that we were able to halt at noon for two hours at Sheikh Nebhan.

The face of the country has absolutely changed. When the Division left for the mountains three weeks ago there was not a vestige of green anywhere. Since then it must have rained a good deal, there is grass everywhere and the bed of the Wadi Ghuzze a few yards from our camp is almost a marsh.

The horses are quite above themselves at the sight of grass, which the poor beasts haven't set eyes on for six months.

19*th*.—After lunch Rae and I rode into Gaza. It was an extraordinarily strong position, a maze of cactus hedges, orchards and sunken roads, with a network of trenches and dug-outs follow-

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ing the lines of the hedges and hidden under the trees.

The dug-outs are lined with coloured tiles and stone from the houses of the town, and are made in tiers twenty or thirty feet below ground level.

Our bombardment must have been very heavy, the wire was cut wherever I saw it, the trenches and gun positions were blown to pieces and the whole area from the front line back to the town itself was pitted with shell-holes.

It is a very pretty town, built partly on a hill and partly in a hollow, its white and red houses encircled by a ring of gardens and palm trees: outside that, on the sea side, a belt of sand dunes and on the landward side an amphitheatre of green hills.

We scaled Ali Muntar Hill,[1] from which the Turks must have been able to see everything that went on in our lines; there is an uninterrupted view for miles in every direction. But it had not been much use to them for observation during the battle: the whole place was a pulp—not a square foot untouched by the Hows or the guns of the monitors, and the O.P's were indicated only by a few shattered timbers and bits of broken iron.

[1] On the S.W. edge of the town. The hill up which Samson carried the gates of the city.

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Our stay was cut short by heavy rain, and by the time we got in we were wet through, a state which continued all night as far as I was concerned, owing to Bowen having forgotten the properties of rain and omitting to close my bivouac, so that my flea-bag was flooded out.

The men are pretty uncomfortable, but they are issuing them with serge clothing and great-coats. It is very cold at night now, and is dark by 5 o'clock.

20th.—The rain continued at intervals all day, and things were generally very unpleasant. General Chetwode, commanding the Corps, presented decorations to a representative parade of the Division in the morning, at which I attended. We spend a considerable percentage of our time forming two sides of a square these days, listening to congratulations on past fighting and quite superfluous assurances of more to come.

21st.—A fine morning, and I had the satisfaction of watching my bed dry under a fairly warm sun. It is extraordinary how much you miss the sun when it disappears for a day; I must say I prefer too much sun to too much rain any day.

Rode into Gaza again with the General after lunch. We found Ali Muntar crowded with

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people who had come to look at their old enemy. In the trenches Ali Muntar was the outstanding feature of one's existence, it was impossible to site a trench this way because it was enfiladed from Ali Muntar, you couldn't march that way because you were in view from Ali Muntar; wherever you went the Evil Eye of Ali Muntar was upon you.

22*nd*.—Rae and I rode down to Sheikh Hassan on the coast N.W. of Gaza, where some parties of ours were clearing the battlefield; it is an interesting place, where the 54th Division got round the town on the seaward side.

Coming back we stopped in Gaza and went into several houses. One was particularly fascinating, built in two stories round an open court with a date palm in the middle and enclosed by a very high wall. We climbed up by an open stairway to the harem, which had a wide balcony, looking down into the court, flanked at each end by a stone tower. I felt like chalking my name on the street door and coming back to claim the place at the end of the war (if any).

We also climbed up the minaret of a very pretty mosque which had suffered considerably in the bombardment, but deservedly as the observer's telephone wire was still dangling from the balustrade at the top.

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Many of the houses have odd bits of stone and marble decorated with carving and writing let into the walls, which must have come out of much older buildings, in fact almost every house is built of stone quarried ages ago.

23rd.—At lunch we received sudden orders to move at 3 o'clock to Gaza, which took us very unawares, as General Girdwood, commanding the Division, had been over in the morning and told us we should probably not move for ten days. However, the head of the Brigade was only five minutes late at the starting-point.

We marched via the Kurd Valley, turned east at Outpost Hill, another of our old friends, and then north by Ali Muntar and the Anzac Ridge to our new bivouac near Beit Hanun N.E. of Gaza. It seems we are going right on up the line now, the Division having been moved by special order from G.H.Q.

24th.—The day was spent peacefully, preparatory to a pretty strenuous march north to start to-morrow.

We shall be on short rations, as are the troops in front, because the railway has only reached Beit Hanun, the old Turkish railhead. There the line changes to metre gauge, and we have only a limited amount of Turkish engines and rolling stock; roads are too few for supply

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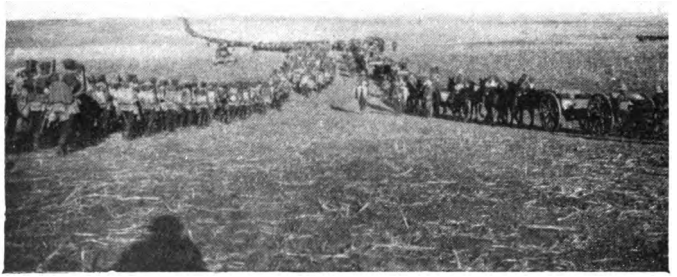

V: The Brigade Marching from Mejdel.

VI: The Approach to Ashdod.

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purposes, and ports on the coast practically non-existent, though they have managed to land a certain amount of stores from the ships.

Rode into Beit Hanun in the afternoon to reconnoitre the road, and was much pleased to see large quantities of 5.9 and other shells in the Turkish depôt there. These things are much more attractive in captivity than at large.

25*th*.—The Division moved at 6 o'clock, the Brigade leading, to Mejdel. The march was most interesting, through the villages of Beit Hanun, Deir Sineid and Burberah, near which we halted for an hour. The route followed was inland about six miles, an unmetalled road traversing a rolling brown country of parched grass, fields of withered stubble and clumps of cactus, merging always on the left into the line of yellow dunes.

Most of the villages are just clear of the dunes. They are all surrounded with gardens and trees, and look like gigantic mushrooms; the houses always cluster on a hill and the mud and straw roofs are so close together that they all blend into one, generally with a few white or red stone houses and a mosque standing out on top.

The line of march was fringed with natives selling the most wonderful oranges, and there

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is a market for the troops in Mejdel, to which Rae and Victor have repaired in search of eggs, chickens and cigarettes, the latter being made of quite good Turkish tobacco.

26th.—The Brigade was on the move at 8 a.m., following the remainder of the Division, to the mouth of the Wadi Sukhereir. On the march we passed through Esdud, the ancient Ashdod. The sanitation of the Philistines is disgraceful, though they somewhat compensated for this defect by producing large quantities of excellent oranges, at a price. Frightful scenes of lamentation occur, owing to the Army having settled the price of oranges at six for a piastre and the native trying to sell them at two for a piastre.

Trouble also arises from men handing the wily nigger a five piastre piece, and the latter, having previously sold out his stock, making a bolt with the change. But they never get clear, no march discipline in the world will keep a defrauded Welshman in the ranks.

27th.—To-day's march brought us to Junction Station, in the Wadi Surar. The villages we passed were much better than any I have yet seen. One of them, Katrah, was quite European with ordinary white houses, broad streets and sidewalks. I couldn't make out at first what was strange about the place, until I realised that

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the men were clad in common or garden trousers and the women had their hair done in the European way. A passing padre informed me that the village was a Jewish colony, and the land round about, very rich and well cared for, all owned by them.

We were marching inland all the time, due east, and passed close to Akir, once Ekron, situated on a hill and probably a pretty strong place when your heavy artillery consisted of a mud brick. In front of us, indistinct in the haze, were the mountains, wherein are the Turks, and Jerusalem beyond.

28*th*.—To-day's was one of the heaviest marches I have competed in. Starting at 7 o'clock the Brigade crossed the railway at Junction Station, where the Turks had blown the bridge, and began forthwith to climb the mountains. The change from plain to hill country is immediate, and although we were on the main Jerusalem road, a good metalled one, the gradients are very steep, and as a matter of fact the column had to keep on the rough ground beside the road nearly the whole way to let the lorries pass, our only means of supply beyond Junction Station.

At 12.30 p.m. the Brigade got into bivouac below Latron, a pretty village on top of a high

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sugar-loaf hill—but all the villages here are perched on the topmost pinnacle of the temple.

I was just congratulating myself on having chosen a particularly nice rock to support my bivouac, when we received orders to move on again at 7 p.m. to Beit Anan, another twelve miles by the map which means at least twenty as the soldier foots it. We have only a miserable one inch map which was made by Lord Kitchener in 1870, and though a wonderful piece of work as a survey map is not representative of the country in detail.

Apparently the reason for our rapid marching up to date and the second march to-day is that the Yeomanry and Australians, having pursued the Infidel as far as he would go into the hills are now finding themselves outnumbered and are themselves being pushed back.

We started from the guard-house at Latron by moonlight at 7 o'clock. Just as the Brigade was moving off the General was sent for to Corps H.Q. situated in the monastery in the village, and I had to go back to Division to see about an alteration in supplies. Shortly after catching up the column I was overtaken by the General in a car and went on with him to Enab, some seven miles from Jerusalem. I was very glad of the lift, being pretty tired, and the mare,

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who normally spends her whole time trying to bolt, scarcely able to get into a trot.

The road runs uphill steeply all the way, through deep gorges with towering hills on both sides and over necks with valleys hundreds of feet below, black and bottomless in the dark shadows.

At Enab the General and I called at the H.Q. of the 60th Division, in the monastery, and picked up guides. They gave us what information they could and told us that our wheeled transport could go no further. I went back and halted the Brigade, which arrived about 11 o'clock, and all stores carried on wheeled transport were dumped on the roadside to be staged on later by camel, while the wagons returned to Latron.

We started off again feeling thoroughly stiff and sore at 1 a.m., and found the route to Beit Anan fully justified its reputation, being a miserable track winding in and out among the hills, encumbered with rocks and holes. All the weaklings had disappeared long ago, but by the time we had passed through Kubeibeh, the ancient Emmaus, and reached Beit Anan, just before dawn, the men were stone cold. However, after we had with great difficulty located the H.Q. of the 8th Mounted Brigade which con-

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sisted of a large rock and a row of people in flea-bags, the K.S.L.I. proceeded at once to relieve the Yeomen, as the Turks had been pushing them back from one hill-top to another for the last three days and they were much reduced in numbers and even more beat than our men, who had marched twenty-six miles since the morning, up-hill all the way and finishing up over eight miles of the most poisonous going imaginable.

29th.—We fixed our H.Q. on a terrace of the hill below Beit Anan, a well-built stone village, still fully populated although exposed to a certain amount of shelling.

So far none of our guns have managed to get up into the mountains except the Bing Boys attached to the Yeomen, otherwise the Hong Kong and Singapore Mountain Battery, screw-guns carried on camels and manned by Indians. The Turk has his batteries already in position and shoots at us unmolested.

It is beastly cold up here, the wind in the early morning is absolutely icy, and I personally have only my drill jacket and no underclothes.

In the evening we had orders to take up a line from the Wadi Zait near the village of Beit Ur el Foka (Upper Beth-Horon) to Beit Dukku, about four thousand yards.

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This line was already held by the K.S.L.I. on the right, but on the left the situation was very obscure, our original orders being to relieve the 6th Mounted Brigade south of the Wadi Zait, but information was subsequently received that nobody was holding this piece of line at all. The fact is that positions had changed hands so frequently and messages took so long in transit that the higher command knew very little of the situation.

In any case to take up the positions ordered it appeared necessary to occupy the village of Et Tireh in front of the K.S.L.I. left, which the Yeomen had been turned out of yesterday. The 25th R.W.F., who were to hold the left of the line, decided that to make their position secure they must take Beit Ur el Foka, which was known to be occupied by the enemy.

This led to a lot of ding-dong fighting next day, and was in itself a most complicated affair owing to the nature of the country, which is one series of rock mountains after another rising at intervals to two thousand feet, with convex sides dropping in precipices to stony wadis between. Most of the hills rise in terraces of rock and are planted with olives or vines where a sufficient patch of earth presents itself.

No one had had time to make a reconnaissance

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of the country, and the map being useless, we got hold of two natives who had been taken by the Yeomen in Foka before they were turned out, added the Brigade interpreter and handed the whole boiling over to Lord Kensington to guide his battalion into Foka.

The 25th R.W.F., setting out soon after dark on the 29th, had to follow a wretched goat track, along which the men could only move in single file, from Beit Anan to Beit Dukku in our front line, thence up and down the hillsides into Et Tireh and so on to Foka, the whole march being parallel to and, as it turned out, mostly inside the enemy's outpost line. Had it not been bright moonlight, which made it possible to pick one's way, the undertaking would have been quite impossible.

As it was, the K.S.L.I. advanced their left and seized Et Tireh without much opposition, and waited for the 25th R.W.F. to come up and prolong their left.

The latter, however, owing to the extraordinary bad going and not trusting too much to the guides, did not reach the village until 2 a.m. on the 30th, four hours late.

30th.—They at once tackled Hill 1750, which overlooks Et Tireh from the north and under cover of M.G. fire captured it with one company,

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who took several Turks dead and alive and a machine-gun. Another Company under Major Rees pushed on quickly so as to make Foka before dawn, and went so fast that their Lewis gun mules were unable to keep up over the rough ground. They reached the village just as day was breaking, not more than eighty strong.

The track from Et Tireh to Foka enters the latter from the rear and is in dead ground until you get right on to the village.

Just outside Foka they surprised a young Turkish officer on a white pony and took him along with them. On arriving in sight of the village they found a Turkish battalion standing to with fires going for the morning meal. Rees without any hesitation got hold of the interpreter, who was doing his best to hide himself, and made him call on the Turks to surrender.

They were completely surprised by the appearance of our people from their rear, and were obviously on the point of surrendering when a Teutonic gentleman on a horse spoke winged words to them and fire was opened from six machine-guns. Most of this was caught by the stone walls round the village, and Rees' company opened rapid on to the Turks, successfully dealing with a large number of them, including the German, and the rest held up their hands.

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Rees thus found himself in possession of five hundred and forty unwounded Turks and a village to defend. The prisoners were quickly marshalled into fours under their own officers by the interpreter, who by this time was half dead with fright; one of the native guides, on the other hand, who had been shot in the foot, sat down under a house and watched the proceedings without any sign of emotion.

The Turks, under an escort of some twenty men, were marched off towards our lines down the Wadi Zait, but here a further complication arose, because the enemy were found to hold an outpost line in front of Foka, faced by a regiment of Australian Light Horse, of whom, in the general obscurity that clouded the whole front in the mountains, we knew nothing. Thus the prisoners were fired on by machine-guns between Foka and our lines and from a hill north of the village as well, and considerable confusion ensued.

About two hundred Turks broke loose or were killed, as also were some of the escort, but the latter got the remaining Turks in hand and carried on. The next trouble was the Australians, who were not unnaturally surprised to see a large number of the enemy accompanied by a few British troops bearing down on them, and

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accordingly loosed off. They were finally persuaded to desist, and the long suffering escort eventually handed over three hundred Turks, eight officers and a machine-gun to the Australians, and got a receipt for them, not the least of their achievements.

Meanwhile, Rees with about sixty men was holding Foka against counter-attacks which began to develop almost immediately.

He held on from 5.30 till 8.30 a.m., by which time he was almost surrounded, and as he could get no touch with any of our troops, which was not surprising as there were Turks between him and our line, decided to break out. This he did successfully but at considerable loss, and regained Hill 1750, where he rejoined the company holding it.

During the morning the Turks counter-attacked in strength, all along our new line, and at half-past two in the afternoon rushed our troops on Hill 1750 and retook it. Rouffignac, who commanded the company originally holding the hill, fell off a rock terrace during the withdrawal and broke his leg.

Following on this Major Glazebrook, of the K.S.L.I., having held Et Tireh during the morning against repeated attacks, found himself completely dominated by the enemy on Hill 1750,

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and at 3.30 had to order a withdrawal from the village.

As a result of all this we found ourselves in the evening with the right of the line unchanged, but with a worse situation on the left than when we started, as the Australians, who had been expecting relief and apparently considering that the affair of the prisoners indicated a healthy outlook, disappeared without further discussion, and the line was unheld except by scattered parties of the 25th R.W.F.

However, during the night a battalion of the 229th Brigade established the line on the left and the 24th Welsh, who had been in reserve all day, were ordered to push out and fill the gap in the centre, and at dawn to retake Et Tireh.

Dec. 1st.—The attack did not develop until about 9 o'clock, for although the Welsh had only two thousand five hundred yards to go as the crow flies, it was over country where you are climbing either up or down hill the whole time, often up perpendicular rock walls with every chance of breaking your neck.

They took Et Tireh again with little difficulty and established themselves on the north end of the amphitheatre of rocky hills surrounding the village on the far side.

But the Turks still held Hill 1750—although

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the 229th Brigade had informed us during the night that they had reoccupied it—and brought enfilade M.G. fire to bear on our attacking troops all day. They were also under fire from the greater part of the circle of hills around Et Tireh, from which, owing to their steepness, they were unable to dislodge the Turks.

The 229th Brigade endeavoured to push forward on to Hill 1750 from the hill they had occupied in mistake for it, but came under a heavy fire of all arms and fell back.

The Welsh also began to suffer severely from shrapnel as well as the small arms fire, and it was recognised that Et Tireh could not be held unless the main Zeitun ridge beyond it were held also, and this would mean a concerted movement of considerable size. At 4 p.m. the General ordered a withdrawal to a line covering Et Tireh from the west.

The Welsh made good this line during the night, and built a line of sangars and stone walls, which is all you can do except in rare cases where you can find earth enough to dig a length of trench.

We received a severe straf from Division about the interpreter, who on getting out of Foka had not stopped running until he reached Division, where he pitched a most harrowing tale of the

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horrors he had undergone and his own fortitude. He was returned to us with his moral absolutely shattered and strict injunctions that we were not to risk his yellow hide again.

2nd.—All was quiet to-day, and I went off to see the right of the line at Beit Dukku. The left I had spent a good deal of time in yesterday and the day before endeavouring to find out what was going on as the cables are continually being cut by the stones.

We are beginning to get some guns up now by the track euphemistically called on the map "Roman Road," but it takes twelve horses to pull a field-gun up it. The Turk fortunately cannot haul his 5.9's far enough off the Jerusalem road to reach us, but does his best to make up for it with 4.2's, which, however, cannot get at our terrace behind the village. The office is in a cave which I should imagine from the smell was normally used to keep goats in.

3rd.—The enemy shows no sign of continuing the engagement, which is as well. After the heavy marches and continuous fighting of the last week we are pretty thin on the floor and glad of a rest.

It is becoming very cold; when we first arrived it was hot as long as the sun was up, but now there is a chill wind blowing all day that

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whistles round the corner of our mountain and enfilades the bivouacs however much you try to protect them.

4th.—It started to rain in the morning and continued on and off all day. This complicates matters a good deal, because up to the present we have been getting supplies by camel convoys, the roads being impassable to wagons. Now the wet has come and turned the dust on the tracks to mud, and on slippery ground camels simply cannot stand up, much less move.

The rations have been short all the time we have been here, and it will be uncomfortable if a further falling off occurs.

Yesterday the 16th Devons of the 229th Brigade tried to take Foka, but had less luck than we did. They were successful in capturing it, but were counter-attacked all the morning from the surrounding hills, which quite dominate the village, and after a most unpleasant dusting, evacuated it in the afternoon with a loss of eleven officers and two hundred and fifty men.

5th.—The inhabitants of Beit Anan have had to be evacuated, because the regiments in the line kept on reporting that they were signalling to the enemy.

A search was conducted through the village and one or two suspicious looking individuals

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found who were probably Turkish deserters, but I think most of the signalling was caused by people shaking fleas off their shirts.

The General ordered the unfortunate wretches to remove themselves to villages further west. I must say I was very sorry for them having to trek off into the cold with clothes consisting entirely of holes.

Dukku, meanwhile, which is right in the outpost line, is still fully populated. The natives of these parts take not the slightest notice of a battle raging in their midst, simply disappear into the caves and cellars which honeycomb every village, and emerge when things have calmed down again with complete lack of interest as to whose hands they have fallen into.

In the evening the Brigade was relieved by the 29th Brigade of the 10th Division, and concentrated in the Wadi Marua behind Beit Anan.

6th.—To-night we take over the line immediately to the right of the sector we have been holding, so that the relief is nothing but a white elephant, with the added discomfort of moving from one line to another, no light business in these days of no transport.

The new sector includes Nebi Samwil, the hill on which is the mosque and tomb of Samuel, and from which you can see Jerusalem about five

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VII : Colonel Clegg, the General and Captain Lloyd near Dukku.

VIII : Turkish Sangar on Dreihemeh Hill after capture by 24th R.W.F.

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miles distant. It has been the scene of hard fighting, and makes a sharp salient into the enemy's line; they hold El Jib (Gibeon) which flanks Nebi Samwil on the north, they hold the village of Nebi Samwil while we hold the mosque thirty yards away on the crest, and they are on the El Burj ridge round the south side of Nebi.

Several attempts have been made to improve matters by taking El Jib, but it is a formidable position approached by a wide open valley swept by the enemy's machine-guns, and all attacks have been rather costly failures.

The 180th Brigade of the 60th Division handed us over most palatial H.Q. in the Latin hospice at Kubeibeh, half inn and half monastery, run by an old German baroness, a very clever old lady full of praise for the British and recriminations for the Germans. We treat her with great respect, even to the extent of detailing an orderly to accompany her when she goes for an airing in the village. The hospice is a stout stone building with a long dining-room which is used as a mess, and from the balcony you can see most of our line.

7th.—The rain again descended on us and we were heartily thankful for our good quarters, though it is the draughtiest, coldest house I ever remember, and one night in it after sleeping in

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the open so long has provided me with a complete outfit of colds and sore throats.

The enemy appear to appreciate the German ownership of the place; they frequently put shells on the road on each side and in the monastery near by, but carefully avoid the hospice.

The day passed in preparation for to-morrow's battle, which will settle the fate of Jerusalem. Our job is to hold on to Nebi Samwil at all costs and develop all possible fire from it with our automatic guns and Stokes mortars, while the remainder of the Division and the 60th Division swing the line up from its present position facing east to one facing north astride the Nablus road, and the 53rd Division coming up from Hebron in the south envelops Jerusalem.

8th.—The bad weather continued, in fact became much worse and greatly hindered the advance. Between heavy showers of rain, thick clouds of icy mist rolled up the valleys from the sea and hid everything from view as effectively as a London fog.

The 24th Welsh on Nebi Samwil put in a lot of shooting which must have made the Turk very uncomfortable as it was all in direct enfilade, and the Stokes mortars fired ninety rounds a gun. The enemy plastered the hill all day with both heavy and light stuff, to the considerable

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detriment of Samuel's resting-place. Our casualties, however, were very slight, thanks to the excellent cover provided by the rock terraces and caves, and our heaviest loss was caused by a bursting Stokes.

At the end of the day the rest of the Division and the 60th were hung up short of their objectives by small parties of Turks which the low visibility prevented them from dealing with.

I spent most of the day in our O.P. looking down the valley towards El Jib, from which we expected to be counter-attacked; but probably owing to the filthiness of the weather the Turk failed to rise to the occasion.

Sigsoldman is much elated at a misfortune which occurred to his opposite number in the 229th Brigade last night. The Brigade H.Q. party took the wrong wadi on the way to their Battle H.Q. and got lost. They had set out with the intention of laying three miles of cable, but by the time the attack was to start they had laid fourteen, had run out of wire and were still trekking.

General Hoare accordingly instructed his Signal Officer to tap in on every wire he could find and send to Division: "General Hoare is advancing aaa Am dis to Division."

This was well carried out, and the Division

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received ten telegrams, all exactly alike, on General Hoare's own wire, which had been laid several times round the bottom of the same hill.

9th.—Last night the Turks withdrew from all their forward positions and at 7.30 this morning our patrols reported the village and further slopes of Nebi Samwil clear of the enemy. They further evacuated El Jib and the hills east of it, and during the day all the objectives of yesterday were occupied, with not much more than desultory sniping and a little shelling.

At midday the news came that Jerusalem had been taken, surrendered by the Chief of Police. There were over a thousand wounded Turks left behind, and the city has not been damaged at all. A bottle of wine was purchased from the baroness and we celebrated the occasion suitably.

The weather, which had improved to the extent of sunshine in the morning, closed down to heavy rain again shortly after lunch, at which auspicious moment orders came for us to extend our line to the left in relief of the 29th and part of the 30th Brigade, handing over the prophet's abode to the 230th Brigade, small loss, as it always takes any spare shells going and is a mass of unburied corpses and evil smells.

The line now will be a long one, and we have

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to move H.Q. back to Beit Anan to get into a central position, while the Division descends upon the hospice. The General stayed there till next morning, but Victor and I went on to Beit Anan at once. It was a wretched night and I got the full benefit of it, having to stand about handing out depressed guides as the regiments came through, which they didn't do till after midnight owing to the pitch blackness of the night and their camels being practically immobile in the mud.

10*th*.—The General came over after breakfast, and we established our mess in the upper storey of the best house in the village, once the Mukhtar's [1] harem, rendered fairly habitable by expelling the unpleasant mattresses and pots which the furniture consists of. I slept in the place last night, but have decided that as I have no change of clothes my bivouac is safer, though cold. Most of the Brigade H.Q. men have billeted themselves fairly comfortably in the cleaner houses of the village, and the sun appeared to-day, a great blessing to the battalions, who have been wet through for three days without any possible means of drying anything.

11*th*.—In our absence all the inhabitants of Beit Anan have returned and the place is again

[1] Headman of the village.

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thickly populated. They are an awful nuisance quite apart from their shirt-waving tendencies and are always asking for passes to go to Jerusalem to buy food and then coming back to say it is too expensive there and they must go to Ramleh. I am sorry for the poor blighters; the Turks took everything they had and there is great scarcity all round, but it is impossible for us to give them anything with supplies as short as they are.

12*th*.—The enemy continues to hold the line in front of us and shows no sign of going back any farther.

There was to have been a battle the day after we got here, but it was postponed for the weather. The scheme is to occupy the high ground in the neighbourhood of Ram Allah, six miles to the N.E., and consolidate a line there for the winter, when campaigning is impossible. They say that between Christmas and March the rain never ceases, and from what I have seen of the weather already I can quite believe it.

13*th*.—Went down to see Colonel Spence-Jones in the afternoon. His outposts hold the hills east of the Wadi Selman, once the Valley of Ajalon. The wadi is a narrow cleft between two steep ridges, very difficult to get into and out of, and by no means the spacious valley

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in which the Israelites are portrayed in conflict with the Amorites.

14*th*.—Beit Anan is a great deal more comfortable now than when we held the same line before, as the last battle caused the Infidel to remove most of his howitzers, and it is now possible to lounge about on the roof in full view of the enemy on the Zeitun Ridge, three thousand yards away, with complete immunity from everything except an occasional whizz-bang which won't go through a three foot stone wall.

Parts of the village are ages old; one house has an olive press and oil cistern that look as if they dated back to Biblical times. The press consists of a tree reaching from floor to roof, with a screw-thread, fixed in a large slab of stone in the floor. The slab is screwed tighter and tighter until all the oil is squeezed out into the tank. The whole contraption looks most weird and dangerous in the dark house with its vaulted roof, for like many of the houses it has no windows.

15*th*.—Went up to the right of the line held by the 10th K.S.L.I. near El Jib. Battalion H.Q. and the reserve company are in Beit Izza, a curious village let into the top of a hill, the roofs of the houses flush with the ground, which makes it a considerably warmer spot than most.

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The men, moving about the stone courts in their steel helmets and greatcoats might belong to any epoch, and probably look much like Titus' soldiers did two thousand years ago.

I was considerably amused at a respectable country squire like Colonel Lonsdale having to live in a filthy native house full of mud-furniture and tibben, which is mentioning only its less objectionable inmates. However, they are lucky at Beit Izza in that the inhabitants have fled.

16*th*.—The General and I attended a conference at Division in the morning, as a result of which we shall be pushing the line on in a week or so with a view to settling down in the best positions possible until we can advance again, which, apart from the weather, cannot be done until we have been equipped on a different transport establishment with something to supplement the unfortunate camels. They have already begun to do this, and every battalion has seventy little white donkeys, which are strung together in eights with a Gyppie driver to look after each batch. They are extraordinarily strong, and in spite of being so small carry a load of 100 lbs. apiece.

17*th*.—The attractions of bully beef having begun to pall a convoy of limbers has been sent down to Deir Sineid, three or four days' march,

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where there is reputed to be a canteen. They are also to look in at all A.S.C. haunts on the way and try to collect some of our mail, which must be accumulating in large quantities somewhere down the line as we have had no cigarettes or stores from Egypt since we arrived in the mountains. The only article of commerce that reaches these fastnesses is oranges, which are brought by natives from Jaffa and can be had at six for a piastre if you devote sufficient time to argument and threats of the police.

18*th*.—Went down to the Wadi Selman after lunch to see Colonel Spence-Jones, who is unwell and just off to spend a few days with the Field Ambulance in Kubeibeh, where they have very comfortable quarters in the monastery.

This climate ought to be healthy, it is quite bracing enough, but I think the long period between baths preys on some people's minds and disagrees with them.

I have recently been attacked by septic sores, which I never had in the desert or at Gaza, where the whole army was covered with them. However if I can find a suitable receptacle and some hot water I may manage a bath. I should like one about Christmas if possible just to mark the occasion; as far as one can see there won't be anything else to celebrate it with.

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19*th.*—Awoke to find that Allah had again been unkind and was providing more rain, which produces greater discomfort than anything else and means that you are cut off from your food until the camels decide to walk again.

Anything more bleak and dismal than these mountains when it is raining it is impossible to imagine, and the worst of it is that when it is raining hardest you can often see Ramleh and Jaffa bathed in sunlight with the sea looking blue and warm beyond.

From the roof of our house, on a clear day you can also see Mount Carmel, standing high above the hills to the north.

Our already long line is to be extended up to Beit Ur el Tahta, when we shall be holding some six miles of country. Of course, the line is only held by outposts, but six miles is a fair stretch to look after especially when one has been continually in the line for three weeks under the most unattractive conditions with a lot of active fighting thrown in and the battalions down to less than four hundred men each. They have very little rest and no chance to clean up and get dry.

But after the next battle the line will be much shorter and we shall probably be pulled out. Our casualties have been considerably heavier

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than those of the other brigades, and for that reason we did not take part in the last advance and shall probably be in reserve in the next, which is always unsatisfactory and leaves you available to be thrust into the first gap that requires stopping.

20th.—Started out early with the General to look at the new ground we are taking over to-night.

It poured with rain the whole time, which didn't worry the General so much as he had two waterproofs and innumerable waistcoats, some in position, others carried by his orderly, but I felt like a drowned rat, though you don't get a chance to feel cold hauling yourself up these hills.

We reached the top of the highest hill in the outpost line when it was quite covered in mist and you couldn't see twenty yards; having waited for some time we were on the point of giving it up and making for home when the mist suddenly rolled away, the sun came out, and we could see the whole line from Foka to Tahta, Upper and Lower Beth-Horon.

Foka, from where we saw it across the Wadi Zait, resembles a castle in a fairy story, balanced precariously on the top of a hill like a pinnacle.

The hill we were standing on was rather an

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extraordinary place too, covered with massive stone foundations, breast high with just the doorways left, and numerous caves both natural and artificial, which one could see from the cartridge cases lying about had recently been the lair of Turkish snipers.

21*st*.—We had orders yesterday that as soon as the new line had been taken over we were to push forward and reoccupy Foka. I don't think there will be any difficulty this time, as the Turks have withdrawn their outpost line to the main Zeitun Ridge and only send an occasional patrol to the village.

I went over to Lord Kensington's H.Q. in the morning to explain what the General wanted done. The ground opens out into a flat basin behind his quarters and is stiff with guns, even a battery of six-inch Hows has been dragged up and is lying doggo for the next show, due as soon as the weather clears.

The line is being pushed forward in order to cover batteries which are to be hauled almost into Foka, and parties working on the Roman road which runs through the village, at present a mere rocky stream carrying the rain water down the hill and almost impassable even for pack animals.

I got thoroughly wet ; I don't know what will

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happen if it occurs again to-morrow. My trousseau was not designed for this.

22*nd*.—The wind swung round to the east in the night and blew very strong all day, which though chilly gives things, including my breeches, a chance to dry.

Fortunately, in spite of there being most stringent orders against cutting down trees of any description, we are not short of firewood, as the Mukhtar and his wife in person bring us a daily peace-offering of wood on behalf of the inhabitants of Beit Anan. This seemed at first a considerable sacrifice, as the native regards an olive tree as only less sacred than the Prophet's beard, but it was explained later when it was discovered that they were felling the trees of their neighbours of Beit Dukku, who were conveniently evacuated from the village when the 10th Division held the line.

There are in Dukku enormous stores of dried figs, corn and olive oil, which latter is very useful for rubbing on the feet and boots of the 24th R.W.F. who hold the village.

The whole Brigade is very badly off for boots, and as no amount of indenting will produce any new ones it is extremely difficult to combat the Trench Foot peril, cases of which are looked on with much disfavour by the authorities.

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The unfortunate Nicholls of the 24th Welsh had an unpleasant experience in this connection, due to his ignorance of the official point of view on the subject.

He was sent down to the Field Ambulance suffering from Trench Foot and had the misfortune to be shown into the room where the General was visiting Colonel Spence-Jones. The Colonel inquired what was the matter and Nicholls replied cheerfully that he had Trench Foot.

From this point onwards the conversation was monopolised by the General with such good effect that the whole Brigade now suspects the complaint to be a vice rather than a virtue and Nicholls has assumed the cognomen of Trench Foot.

23*rd*.—Last night was a real snorter. A rushing mighty wind kept the tent Victor and I live in banging like big guns and I felt certain it would come down. It did so by numbers at 2.30 a.m. The accident didn't wake me up, but Victor's remarks eventually did, and I found the tent had fallen across me leaving him out in the gale and pouring rain. He retired to dry himself in the Mukhtar's harem, but the pole was across me and I couldn't get out until extricated by Bowen in the chilly dawn.

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Went up to Dukku after breakfast to walk the wet out of my clothes and to look at the hills we shall be required to attack by way of Christmas festivities. This Yule Tide gives every promise of being seasonably cold. I could wish some good fairy would provide me with a pair of boots and a waterproof.

24th.—The General's tent collapsed in its turn last night, and he also fell back on the harem. This, in spite of an enormous stone wall and a zareba of camel-thorn built round it by numerous working parties and gangs of natives from the village.

I felt it was a just retribution for his lack of sympathy with our disaster of the previous night.

The weather continued cold and wet, and is having a very bad effect on the animals. The horses look like skeletons, the mules not quite so bad, but the wretched little donkeys are dying like flies owing to short rations and cold, which is only to be expected, as they are accustomed to the warmth of Egypt.

We had very definite information that the Turks intend to-morrow or quite soon to attack in strength and re-take Jerusalem. I wish them joy of it; the weather has been bad enough to hold up our advance and will probably be no

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more propitious for the Turk, who is never very expert in the attack.

There are also reported, mostly by deserters, to be divisions of Huns on their way to help the Infidel, and also large reinforcements from the Caucasus, which is more than likely since the Russians are retiring on their winnings.

25*th*.—The worst Christmas I have ever spent, the only good point about it being that it is most improbable I shall ever be called on to spend a more unpleasant one.

It rained even more heavily last night than during the previous one, and what with telegrams about our own forthcoming battle, telegrams about the Turks' forthcoming battle, and telegrams from padres asking leave to celebrate the occasion in Bethlehem, I had every opportunity of studying the weather conditions during the hours of darkness.

The water began to trickle in under the flaps and rose steadily in the bottom of the tent until at 5 o'clock we deserted and went over to the harem, where the topic of Merry Christmas was somewhat studiously avoided.

After a breakfast of pronounced gloom, I accompanied the General to a conference of Commanding Officers at the H.Q. of the 24th Welsh, now commanded by Major Woodcock

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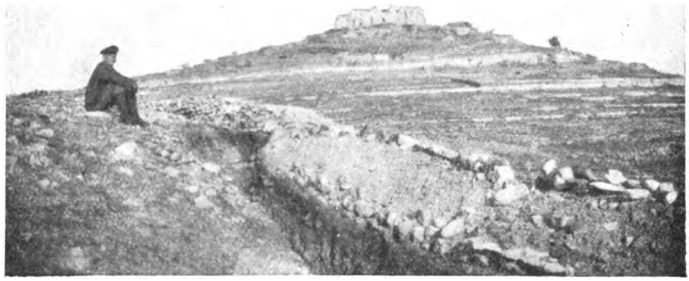

IX: Nebi Samwil Hill and Mosque.

X: The Ruins of Nebi Samwil.

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in the absence of the Colonel. We stood under an olive tree while the General explained the plan of attack, what time the rain trickled off the branches down the backs of our necks and splashed on to our already pulpy maps. A running stream now fills the bed of the Wadi Selman, and every rock has a minature waterfall dashing down it.

The General, whose luck was not in to-day, had to set off to a pow-wow at Divisional H.Q. at Kubeibeh directly after lunch, where he got another sound wetting and not much else, except a rather damp box of matches off their Christmas tree.

I spent the afternoon in my shirt tails blowing heavily on a collection of wet sticks and trying to dry my breeches. Result, an outer.

Dinner was more successful, Austin, the Mess Corporal, having tracked down and slain a sheep in the Wadi Selman yesterday, though it was very under-cooked and had never been much of an animal. There was also a plum-pudding which had been saved for the occasion.

We all went to bed in the harem, the General, Victor, Rae, Signals, and myself, which must have reminded it of its better days. As a final effort at heartiness we absorbed hot rum and water in bed, the only pleasant moment of the

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day; but I was thoroughly glad to see the last of it and would much rather do without Christmas at all than have another like that.

26th.—The seasonable weather continued and has at length had the effect of washing away a considerably larger section of the railway than usual, and supplies are decreasing accordingly. They cut down the animal ration by half to-day, which, as it was already only half what it should be, will inevitably leave us without horses, mules, or donkeys.

The fact that the Turks and ourselves have both arranged an attack for the same time is really rather confusing and involves a lot of work; but the authorities are very pleased about it, and having by some means become possessed of the enemy's Operation Order are particularly anxious for him to put it into execution. He is to attack astride the Jerusalem-Nablus road to retake Jerusalem. Our attack, ready prepared for some time and only waiting for the weather, will be delivered as soon as he is well committed, and is bound to roll up his flank completely.

I only hope they will hurry up and have done with it so that we may have a chance to settle somewhere out of the wet for the winter.

27th.—Yesterday evening we received orders

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that the attack (ours) would take place to-day, the attack (Turkish) having developed on the 60th Divisional front covering Jerusalem in the late afternoon.

Our task for to-day was the capture of the high ground in front of our right and centre, in order to protect the right flank of the 229th Brigade in their attack on the Zeitun Ridge, a high bluff commanding Foka and all the ground in the neighbourhood.

The 24th R.W.F. and 24th Welsh had the duty of taking the objectives allotted us; the 25th R.W.F. were lent to the 10th Division and the 10th K.S.L.I. were in reserve to the 229th Brigade.

At 4 o'clock this morning I went up to Beit Dukku and established the Brigade Forward Station in a cave with six inches of slush and bully beef tins on the floor and a large stone olive press in the corner.

Before dawn the 24th Welsh took Hill 1910, the left objective, by assault. The Turks, who had always clung tenaciously to this hill, counter-attacked at once, and drove them off before they had time to consolidate. Half an hour later the Welsh attacked the hill again, retook it and finally held it against all comers, taking three machine-guns and fifty dead Turks.

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This affair was over very quickly and all was quiet by dawn. There was not many casualties, but Tony Yorke, who was attached to Brigade H.Q. most of the time we were before Gaza, one of the very best, was killed when his company retook the hill.

No further move was made until 10.15, when the leading battalion of the 229th Brigade was seen to have made good the crest of the Zeitun Ridge. This was the signal for the advance of the 24th R.W.F., who had concentrated during the night in the wadi east of Dukku. They took their first objective, a hill named Khirbet Ed Dreihemeh, without difficulty, and at 11 o'clock, covered by overhead machine-gun fire from Dukku and the neighbouring hill-tops, assaulted the main objective, Hill 2450. In the face of heavy machine-gun fire they carried the position in the first rush, but just as they reached the summit our guns opened on it, several hundred yards short of their target, and the Turkish counter-attack followed immediately afterwards.

The R.W.F. were driven off the crest, and in spite of several attempts made during the day failed to establish themselves on it again. They maintained themselves on the forward slopes of the hill and on Dreihemeh, waiting for a

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bombardment of the sangars on the summit under cover of which to attack again. I spent hours on the telephone trying to persuade the gunners to concentrate on Hill 2450.

I had the F.O.O. of an eighteen-pounder battery with me, and from Dukku we could see everything that was going on, the Turks moving about in their sangars and our people crawling up the side of the hill below them. But eighteen-pounder shells are no use against troops sheltered by rocks and it was very difficult to get hold of the Hows; the cables were continually being cut and they had so many calls upon them that it was not until 4.30 in the afternoon that a ten-minute bombardment of the sangars took place, and then it fell on our own people on the side of the hill as much as on the summit, so that the assault was not a success.

Soon after dusk the Turks launched two attacks, one following the other, in an attempt to dislodge the R.W.F. from the ground they had made, but both were repulsed.

Later, when all was quiet, the 24th Welsh came forward from Hill 1910 which was masked by the ground taken by the 24th R.W.F., and relieved the latter.

I passed a night of extreme unpleasantness in the cave preparing for the show to go on to-

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morrow, the General, who came up during the day having gone back to Beit Anan.

The two regiments engaged had about 150 casualties, which does not look much on paper, but the battalions are only three hundred and fifty strong and become weaker in numbers every day, though what are left are pretty tough.

Bowen staggered up the hill after dark with some dinner and a blanket, and if it had not been for the telephone I shouldn't have had such a bad night.

28th.—The Turks evacuated their positions during the night, and by daybreak our patrols were on Hill 2450 and pushing on east of it.

Their attack on the 60th Division yesterday and the previous night caused the enemy very heavy casualties, and although they delivered eight distinct attacks they only succeeded in driving in one advanced post on an isolated hill near Tel el Ful.

The attack of the 10th Division and the 229th Brigade on our left went ahead fast yesterday and threatened to cut off the attacking Turks altogether, with the result that last night they commenced to withdraw and to-day the XXth Corps starts a general advance, the attacks which have already begun are continuing, the

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60th Division are passing to the offensive and also the 53rd Division beyond them north of Jerusalem.

Fortunately for these operations the rain has lifted and the sun been visible at intervals, so that we are becoming tolerably dry and feeling much better about things generally.

The 24th Welsh continued to advance without opposition and did not again get touch with the enemy. In the morning the 230th Brigade began to advance on our right and the 229th pushed ahead on the left.

In the evening the latter Brigade captured Beitunia, at the eastern end of the Zeitun Ridge, and at the same time the 230th advancing north-east crossed our front and joined hands with the 229th. Thus we were left out of the hunt altogether and came into reserve for the first time for a month.

In the night the Brigade, including the two battalions which had been detached, concentrated at Beitunia, with the exception of Brigade H.Q., the General refusing to budge until morning. I was much rejoiced at this and went back to an excellent night's rest in a dry bed at Beit Anan.

29th.—The General and I started out early for Beitunia across country, while Victor took

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the baggage round by the El Jib valley, the only way possible for camels.

As the crow flies Beitunia is not more than four miles from Beit Anan, but as you walk, across the most fearsome hills and wadis, you can only measure the distance by the sweat of your brow.

Our way lay across Hill 2450, bearing traces of many battles, a most malodorous spot covered with the corpses of Yeomen, men of the 75th Division, horses, and in the sangars on the top, Turkish soldiers and our own side by side.

There were many more defunct Turks than I had expected, and they had left all their gear behind them when they went. I found a capital yellow plush waistcoat in one gentleman's bivouac, which fits me nicely, but nothing was visible in the way of boots.

There was a trail of dead and wounded Turks all the way to Beitunia, they all seem to crawl into caves to die, in one we came upon six wounded huddled together in an awful mess.

Beitunia was reached about midday, and having located the Brigade we set out at once to find a good house to live in. The smaller houses as usual were filthy, but there was one enormous rambling place that was quite clean and capable of accommodating the whole of

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Brigade H.Q., about seventy men, in its store-rooms and courts. We selected the harem part for our quarters; it is completely cut off from the rest of the house and has four good rooms with coloured glass windows and tiled floors.

Ram Allah, the next village N.E. of this, a very large one with a big stone church, was captured by the 230th Brigade this morning, and further fighting east of the Nablus road took place in the afternoon, in the course of which the Turk shelled Beitunia with some skill, and the General and I retired down the hill to the battalions' bivouac area for a cup of tea.

The village is surrounded with dead Turks, caught when the 229th Brigade came down on them from the Zeitun Ridge, and the local gentry are having the time of their lives going through their pockets.

The inhabitants show extravagant signs of pleasure at our arrival, though whether this is due to love of the British or fear of the invader is doubtful. One elderly and very dirty old lady insisted on giving us water while we were setting up a helio on the roof of her house, which incidentally I managed to put my foot through.

Volunteers under the Mukhtar came and cleaned up our house, and were so unpleasantly

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friendly that they had eventually to be kicked out.

30*th*.—Yesterday evening our final objectives were taken and we saw the last Turks being driven over the high ground north of Ram Allah, so I trust we shall now be allowed to settle down peacefully until the weather clears, though as a matter of fact the last two days have been splendid.

The battalions were all employed on road making, partly on the foundation of the old Roman road, partly breaking fresh ground in the El Jib valley.

Having seen the working parties safely delivered into the clutches of the R.E., I rode round some of the positions the Turks had occupied. Beitunia had sheltered a nest of batteries, all of which, including the 5.9's, had decamped leaving their ammunition behind neatly stored in little round stone pill-boxes.

The Mukhtar was summoned to audience and informed that unless the village dogs were prevented from yowling like they did last night something serious would happen to him. For the moment at any rate you would not think that there was a dog in the place.

31*st*.—Rode out with the General to see the battalions at work on the road, where they are

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toiling like Trojans, the news having been spread abroad that as soon as it is finished we shall be withdrawn to Latron or somewhere near it to rest and re-fit, which with any luck will mean leave for everybody. The only thing is that the railway is very congested and it may be some time before anything but supplies and ammunition is allowed to travel on it.

I sincerely hope we shall reach our new quarters before the rain comes on again, but the outlook is not promising at the moment. The situation was somewhat relieved by my acquiring a pair of ammunition boots to-day and some new socks.

In the evening I secured one of the earthen fire-bowls of the country, collected a lot of hot water, and in a splendid atmosphere of smoke and steam had a really luxurious bath.

Jan. 1*st*, 1918.—The New Year was heralded by a change of wind and torrents of rain, which brought the two nearest battalions rushing into Beitunia for billets at which they had previously turned up their noses, not unreasonably in view of their extreme dirtiness. The 24th R.W.F. and 10th K.S.L.I. are less fortunate, being bivouacked on the road near El Jib, where the water comes streaming down the rock-terraces and nothing can be kept dry.

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Some more wounded Turks were brought into the village to-day. They have been lying in the open for four days without any food, and are certain to die. If a wounded man is not picked up during or immediately after a battle he stands a very poor chance in this country, where you can walk right on a man in the rocks without seeing him, and once an action is over it is very unlikely that anyone will go near the battlefield again unless there is time for salvage parties to clear it.

2nd.—The rain continued heartily with the obvious intention of preventing the arrival of the rations.

The British Army is hard to please; when it is fine and rations arrive we grouse at having to face bully for breakfast, lunch, and dinner, but when the despised bully fails to materialise one's thoughts turn quite fondly to it.

But the worst aspect of the situation is the shortage of forage for the horses; there is no hay and the small quantity of barley that arrives is always mouldy from lying in the wet. The ration is supplemented to a certain extent by house to house searches for tibben, which gives them something to think about but contains no nourishment.

Under-feeding and exposure have led to heavy

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losses in animals, the El Jib valley is strewn with mules and donkeys which have died of exhaustion in the convoys.

3rd.—It was fine again to-day, and the top layer of the village was decorated with a motley collection of blankets, greybacks, and native ladies' apparel set out to dry.

The village, like most in the neighbourhood, is in two sections, one superimposed on the other, each half with its own system of streets. There is apparently nothing to prevent a fellow from building a house on top of yours if he wants to, and it is up to the person who owns the bottom tier to ensure its being strong enough to support any other houses that may be built on it. The system seems to be quite successful, but it is a trifle confusing for a stranger because you have to remember not only which alleyway leads to the house you live in, but also whether the street you approach it by is on ground level or the first floor.

I walked into Ram Allah in the morning. It is an unusually large village with a Greek church and several large convents, and a considerable quantity of the brand of gentry that affect a tarbush and greatcoat in all weathers and are Christians, though that does not prevent their selling figs, almonds, and tobacco to the troops

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at the most outrageous prices. Their Mahommedan brethren are just as bad and ask sixpence for a box of matches—German ones at that. Taken as a whole they are better looking than the natives we have encountered up to date. They seem to improve as one goes up country, and some of them are cleaner, though not much.

4th.—Great lamentation arose in the village last night, caused by the arrival of a Turkish policeman—member of a body that has apparently signed on under our colours in the absence of their rightful taskmasters—from Jerusalem, whither he proceeded to hale the Mukhtar in order that the laws and customs of the British might be expounded to him and his brother Mukhtars. Naturally he thought his sins had been brought home to him and departed in fear and trembling with the whole village to see him off.

As a result of these nocturnal revels the surviving dogs barked all night, and the edict went forth this morning that either they or the departed Mukhtar's deputy must be shot at once. Since then there has been a good deal of shooting in the village, and as it ought not to take more than one round to finish off a Mukhtar I suppose the dogs are catching it.

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5th.—The General, Signals and I rode up to Nebi Samwil bearing our lunch with us.

It is a most interesting place, as much from the view it commands as from its association with the infant Samuel. You can see right away to Carmel and the sea north-westward and look straight down on El Jib in the valley beneath, while to the east Jerusalem is spread out on the hills four miles away with many turrets, steeples, and red-roofed houses breaking the sky-line. Beyond the Holy City rise the tremendous mountains east of Jordan and the Dead Sea, surmounted by the crest of Mt. Nebo, purple and broken with deep clefts and nullahs.

The mosque of Nebi Samwil was a large one, somewhat resembling El Azhar at Cairo, built in several storeys containing the rooms of the monks. Clustered round the east side are the houses of the farmers and members of the colony that centered on the mosque. Now it is an absolute shambles, the mosque and outbuildings are shattered by high explosive ; only the central hall of the mosque remains standing, and curiously enough the last resting-place of the prophet is unscathed and serene amid the surrounding desolation. This is in the main crypt, entered by a narrow arch and winding stairway which brings you out in front of the huge stone

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sarcophagus. The other vaults have been blown in, the roof of one having crushed to death its unfortunate occupant, a horse, by what means induced to descend into the dungeon I can't imagine.

An atmosphere of death and decay overhangs the whole place, dead of every description lie side by side. British soldiers of almost every division in the Army, Indians, Turks, and natives, men, women, and children. The sangars were only thirty yards apart, littered with hand-grenades, trench mortar bombs and equipment, the result of fighting concentrated on the razor-back neck of the ridge, not more than two hundred yards in breadth.

6th.—The rain closed down again, all the more unfortunate as it is Sunday and the battalions have a day off road-making to clean up and get dry, if such a thing is possible on top of a water-shed that breaks up every cloud that crosses it.

The roads are in such a hopeless state that all the undelivered mails for the XXth Corps accumulated at Deir Sineid have been returned to Port Said for carriage by sea to Jaffa—this according to the Post-corporal, but Jaffa also is a far cry from here.

7th.—The wind and rain were more violent than ever last night. The outlying battalions

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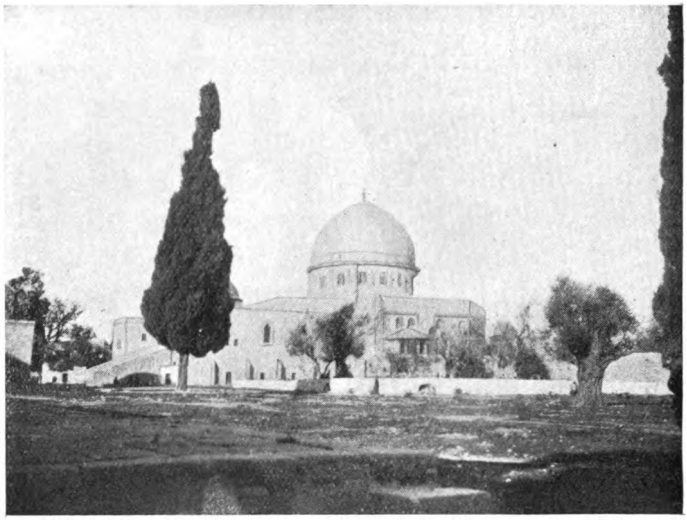
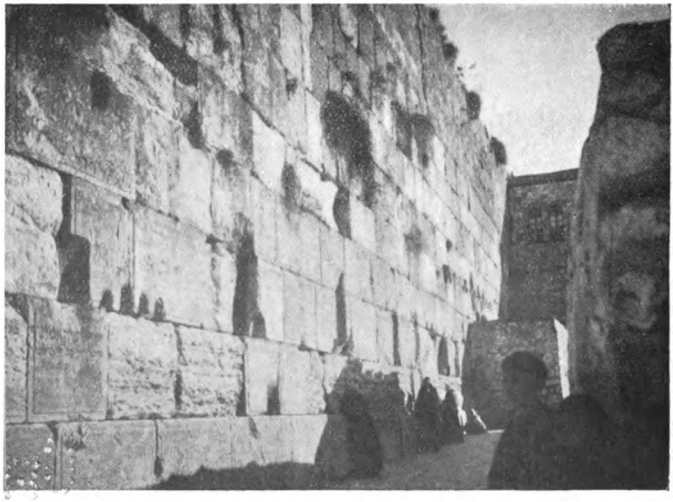


XI: The Mosque of Omar, Jerusalem.



XII: The Jews' Wailing Place, and Wall of Solomon's Temple.

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were washed out, and thirty-five donkeys and numerous camels died. There was snow on the mountains east of Ram Allah and hail fell most of the morning, which put a stop to all work. Delay in this is most annoying as leave has been promised for everyone as soon as the road is completed.

No one seems to know exactly what has happened to the Turks, the weather has prevented air reconnaissance and we have reached the positions required and cannot follow them up, being barely able to maintain ourselves as far forward as this. It is a thousand pities we cannot go on and finish them off. Had it not been for these wretched mountains we might be chasing them up to Aleppo now.

8th.—The real conundrum these days is to know what to do with oneself. There are two alternatives, to go out and be soaked to the skin at once or stay in and blow on a damp fire with intervals of opening the door to let the smoke out and a cold wind in.

It certainly is a most unattractive country, but it seems we are better off than the XXIst Corps on the plain, who live in a sea of mud and have no metal to make roads.

9th.—I am beginning to think it time I went to see Jerusalem, but the drawback is that although

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it is only six miles distant the mountains make it a whole day's journey. The wily Jew knew what he was up to when he invented the Sabbath day's journey, an institution unfortunately not recognised in our army.

There is quite a good hotel there, owned, of course, by a Hun, but now said to be made over to some gentleman in the A.S.C. while the Hun languishes in gaol. It is tantalising to see a place from your window every day and not to have been there, more especially as I believe there is quite a passable brand of cigarette to be had.

10*th*.—Fortune has frowned on us once more. Just as we were congratulating ourselves on having made a quick job of the road, a few callous words on a pink message form added three thousand yards to the task, and visions of Cairo faded abruptly. At this rate, like the song of the camel drivers "Kâm lele, kâm yôm," it will have no end, we shall become Slaves of the Road.

As far as durability goes it is a good road, though not designed for comfort, winding deviously from Biddu—from which point the Crusaders first beheld Jerusalem—to Beitunia. It is better built than the road the Romans made, yet the foundation of theirs still exists though

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no repair has been done on it since the day it was finished.

11*th*.—The sun was quite warm and reminiscent of the departed summer.

Last night was fine too, which was lucky for the interpreter, who having been outpaced by a party sent to overhaul Rafat, a village near by, spent the night on a neighbouring mountain, with only a penknife to protect himself with, though what he expected to be attacked by is uncertain. As a matter of fact he is something of a warrior now, having been decorated by the Sultan with a bright violet ribbon for his doughty work at Foka.

The interpreters with the expeditionary force are a most unbeauteous gang of knaves altogether, mostly like ours, sickly coloured Syrians who can speak any language under the sun except English, and live with a perpetual smirk on their faces.

I came across a different variety the other day in Ram Allah, a pure blooded Squarehead. He admitted he was a Hun and had been living in Constantinople at the outbreak of war, but to avoid service in the German army went as an interpreter with the Turks in their first attack on the Canal in March '15 and took the opportunity to desert to us. The blighter ought to be

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handed back to the Germans at once and made to do his bit.

But the most obnoxious thing I have encountered in the way of interpreters, which had apparently been educated in a Yankee mission, rolled up here a few days ago with an escort of Indian lancers to look for an escaped Turkish prisoner. He had some sort of uniform, an imitation Service Dress cap, the usual lemon-coloured face and what had evidently been at one time a pair of good brown paper boots, but which, having unfortunately not been constructed for campaigning, consisted of nothing more than the eyeholes and laces, fringed with a few rags. After dragging the Turk, who wept bitterly, from his hiding place—I must admit he ran him to ground with remarkable speed—he reported to me that he guessed he would be pulling out for Enab right now and hand this feller over to the boss.

12*th*.—The General and Victor set out in the morning to visit Division at Latron, with the intention of staying over the week end and looking round for billets against our going back for the much discussed rest.

Having cast his eye over the neighbouring villages, Victor is to go straight off on leave—his place being taken here by Tom Naylor of

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the Machine-gun Company—and has been instructed to report on the best way of making the journey to Deir Sineid.

It would be fairly simple if one could travel by the Turkish railway from Junction Station as far as Gaza, and there change to the broad gauge line, but the rains keep washing the former away and it is generally out of commission.

As it is one has to ride to Deir Sineid, just this side of Gaza, which means dossing down by the road for one night, if not two, not unpleasant in ordinary weather, but far from attractive when the plain is a sea of mud and you cannot find a dry spot whereon to unroll your bed.

13*th.*—It poured with rain all day and the rations were an almost negligible quantity, though we did not do so badly, being able to consume Victor's and the General's share in their absence. I think we must have sunk to a very low state of nature. One's sole interest in life is food and I feel sure we shall be soon cutting each other's throats in the night for a tin of bully. There have lately been a good many cases of men stealing each other's iron rations in the regiments, with the resultant strafes.

14*th.*—A fine day again. I spent the morning on the road absorbing any heat available from the sun.

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The General returned in the afternoon, somewhat incensed at his kit having got wet in the limber on the way to Latron owing to the neglect of some person or persons unknown in not placing a wagon cover over it. At the interview the responsibility fell on the Brigade Transport Officer.

Colonel Spence-Jones put in an application for leave to the U.K. to-day, in submitting which he stated himself to be an only child and an orphan, a truly touching appeal from a lad of forty-five. He is much tickled at the idea and is confident of success.

15*th*.—An awful scandal occurred to-day. It was discovered in the morning that the Mess Corporal's breeches had been stolen. The Mukhtar, now returned, was told to produce them at once and inflict summary punishment on the thief. To our dismay an aged dame was shortly produced who was stated to have the pants. Orders were given for her to be removed and the breeches to be produced separately. This was eventually carried out, and the Mukhtar said she should be put to death at once. We protested that this was a little severe, so he reduced the sentence to cutting off her right hand, which was finally commuted to a severe reprimand, but I don't think she will be so

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promiscuous in her choice of underclothing again.

I walked along the road to the bivouac of the 24th R.W.F. and had lunch with Colonel Clegg, lately returned after a severe attack of rheumatic fever. I should imagine the present conditions must be rather depressing for him under the circumstances.

On reaching home I found that leave had been cut down to four nights in Egypt—not worth having with such a journey both ways. Also it looks like the prelude to stopping leave altogether, so I suppose we are in for another show.

16*th*.—There will be a gap in the ranks shortly. Rae Ellis, our Intelligence Department, is going back to the 25th R.W.F. to take command of a company. Apart from any other consideration it will be something of a relief to him to be free of the honourable but uncongenial duties of Mess President, which have weighed rather heavily of late.

It will be a great blow to the rest of us that we shall no longer be able to watch him in his matutinal cold bath, planted in the draughtiest spot in the house between a shell-hole in one wall and a window with no glass in the other; or engaged upon his confidential tome in which is inscribed the Order of Battle of the entire

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Turkish army together with the life history and habits—such as can be mentioned—of Djemal, Von Kress and other leaders of thought in Ottoman military circles.

17*th*.—Cæsar declared a holiday, and the legions ceasing work for the duration of one day, looked over their garments and washed their shirts.

This was becoming rather imperative. The last two Sundays have been wet, and the men have been on the road every day of the week, with the result that they are infested with a variegated assortment of every kind of vermin provided in a native village, and the native of these parts has the inhabitant of a Belgian farm-house beaten in a canter in the dirt stakes.

Their houses are absolutely filthy and the yards a morass; they never wash themselves or their clothes, and the only interest they ever show in their toilet is to sit in the sun and hunt bugs in their galabeas.

18*th*.—General Chetwode, the Corps Commander, came to look at the road in the morning, but made no comments beyond remarking on the size of the boulders protruding through the surface.

The General and I rode as far as Biddu with him, and were invited to visit Corps H.Q. in

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Jerusalem for a couple of days. I had to excuse myself as my clothes are unsuited to the niceties of Corps H.Q., being kept together only by multitudinous patches.

In the course of a tactical exercise instituted by the General for the benefit of senior officers, I inspected the village of Rafat in the afternoon. It was strongly fortified by the Turks, who had lived in the caves which honeycomb the hill it stands on.

These caves are not natural, but very carefully hewn with absolutely square smooth walls. A number of them have a second chamber leading out of the first and were probably used as tombs; at any rate they closely resemble the rock tombs of Upper Egypt, though without any internal decoration.

19*th*.—Phillips of the 24th Welsh joined Brigade H.Q. as Intelligence Officer, and Rae departed to join his company. It is not a job I should care to have; it by no means ends at intelligence, unless that can be construed to mean getting up and going to Ram Allah before breakfast to buy eggs, and such-like pastimes.

The natives in our street had some kind of fantasia last night. They turned out in strength singing the British war-song "Tiddly iddly ighty, take me back to Blighty," and all the cats

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screamed as only Arab cats can, until the machine gunners in the next house arose from their beds and dispersed the assembly with great heartiness.

20*th*.—The first fine Sunday for weeks, a great encouragement to the ablutionists.

The order has gone forth that the men clean their brass work, something of a proposition in view of the fact that there is no cleaning material within several hundred miles. However, the quartermaster-sergeant avers that the old soldier's breath is worth ten button-sticks.

Dined with Guy Rogers of the K.S.L.I., who received this morning a case of fizz with not a single bottle pinched by the A.S.C. It is wonderful what an effect it has on one's outlook. Even this country appears fairly bearable and the wind doesn't smell so much of dead dog. All the same I should like it even better if I could get a week's leave away from it.

21*st*.—The General left for his visit to Corps at Jerusalem; I had intended to accompany him and return the same day, but at the last moment the usual wire came in ordering further work on the road and entailing moves of battalions, so I had to stay behind. We have now to finish the road from Enab to Bireh (Beeroth), a stretch of rather over twelve miles.

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A consignment of canteen stores has just arrived in the limbers sent to Deir Sineid, largely matches and whisky, so that from not having a match in the Brigade every regiment has now £70 worth and can't find anything to light with them.

The whisky has had a better reception, one can't speak at the office telephone without being overcome by the fumes.

22*nd*.—Walked into Ram Allah with Lord Kensington after lunch. He tried to purchase a bernous for use as a dressing-gown, but the wily native now asks such exorbitant prices that it would be simply wicked to do business with him. Most of the inhabitants, especially the Christians, speak English, French, or American and are highly unattractive.

Sigsoldman departed for Cairo in the morning. As there seems no prospect of my getting away I sent Pte. Bradbury, my groom, to Egypt to do some shopping and incidentally to relieve the strain on the transport by depositing my collection of dud shells at Shepheard's.

I had to ring the General up owing to the R.E. disagreeing with our dispositions on the road, and took the opportunity to ask him to find out what was wrong with the leave machine and adjust it if possible.

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The authorities say it is a question of accommodation in Cairo, but I cannot see that the accommodation is affected whether rooms change hands every three days or every seven, as long as too many people are not allowed to go.

There must be dirty work afoot; we shall probably find ourselves doing the great trumpet act round Jericho what time we should be killing the fatted cocktail in Cairo.

23rd.—The General returned from Jerusalem considerably gratified at Sergeant Collins of the 25th R.W.F. having been awarded the V.C. for bayoneting fifteen Turks at Beersheba.

There seems some prospect of leave being extended, but my chances have been ruined again as Victor has to go to Division for a fortnight when he returns, to allow the deserving Q. branch to take leave, regardless of the fact that I, a much more deserving case, have to wait until they have done with him.

The Mukhtar was officially debagged yesterday, firstly because the natives complained that he extorted money from them—which did not really matter in the least as they are making their fortunes out of the soldiers—secondly because he was found to have served for twenty years in the Turkish Army, was seen in the telephone station at their O.P., and subsequently

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showed them the way to save their guns, so he will probably do better in jug.

24th.—Dined with Colonel Spence-Jones last night. His application for leave has born fruit, but only for the usual three weeks at home, which he won't accept and is standing out for six. It is quite possible that the authorities may be so taken aback that they will grant it.

A sausage balloon has appeared near Jerusalem. I always feel sorry for sausages in this country because there is never more than one at a time and it is invariably strafed by Fritz, who waits until the guardian aeroplane has gone home to lunch, and then pounces on it from behind a cloud.

There was one at Enab when we first arrived and fate overtook it next morning, though the observer escaped safely in his parachute.

25th.—Rode to Enab with the General to see the 24th R.W.F., who are working on the far end of the road.

Colonel Clegg has most comfortable quarters in the sheikh's house, a large one furnished with all the latest improvements in the way of art furniture and gilt mirrors. The tomb of the old gentleman's forefathers is used as a sideboard and is said to be quite satisfactory except

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before breakfast when it gives forth rather a musty odour.

Awful inundations of paper are again arriving from Division, daily becoming worse. There is a fortune awaiting the fellow who devises a scheme for keeping the higher formations amused and so preventing their thoughts from turning to journalism.

26*th*.—Fritz tried to bag the wretched sausage during the luncheon interval to-day, but was foiled by vigorous Archieing and by the hasty retreat of the sausage to its lair.

Pte. Bowen went off to spend a couple of days in Jerusalem, which he was properly anxious to see. A party now goes every week and is billeted there for two days to see the sights. Most of them spend the whole time going from one restaurant to another eating eggs at 1s. apiece and drinking anything there is to be had.

The only place they go and look at is the railway station, which is reported to be a poor one.

27*th*.—Our spell of fine weather ended and we were enveloped in mist and rain. It is a curious thing that if it is going to rain it always starts on a Sunday when the men are supposed to be resting.

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Victor wired this morning that he would reach railhead to-morrow. He will have a cheery ride from Ramleh, not more than twenty miles, and will be particularly pleased at having to ride back to Division again at Latron.

28*th.*—Rain continued and I took a sound wetting on my tour of the eternal road, which is to be officially known as Offa's Dyke, in recognition of the services of the Welshmen who built it and of the mud which infests it.

The natives, living up to the reputation of their ancestors, put in a claim for compensation for the stone we are using in its construction. The beautiful ingenuity of the demand can only be realised if one walks across country and tries to pick out soil in the wilderness of stone.

Bowen came back this evening much impressed by the sights of Jerusalem and suitably supplied with flowers from the tomb of Rachel, olive wood boxes and other spurious relics.

29*th.*—A very successful day. To begin with the weather cleared and the sun shone, yea even upon Beitunia. Encouraged by this the General decided that he would sojourn for a while in Cairo, taking Guy Rogers to do orderly officer to him on the journey. Victor who returned from leave in the afternoon painted the attractions of Cairo so vividly at dinner that, after

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the port (recently arrived) had been round twice, the General made up his mind to start first thing in the morning.

Finally, my winter jacket arrived from the dump at Belah together with a good deal of other stuff, mostly drill, but I don't seem to possess any underclothes, and Bowen says we never had any on establishment.

30*th*.—'Midst a scene of intense excitement and instructions against drinking the port during his absence, the General and his escort started for Cairo—with Victor for company as far as Latron—the way being made smooth by a relay of motors from Enab, twelve miles distant and the nearest point a car can reach, to Bir Salem, three miles west of Ramleh.

From Bir Salem you catch a train at 7.30 p.m. and if the bridge over the Wadi Ghuzze has not been washed away by the last rain, you reach Kantara on the Canal at 6 o'clock next morning and Cairo early in the afternoon.

Pretty nearly every field officer and most of the senior captains in the Brigade are on leave now either in the U.K. or in Egypt, and a large number of the men.

David of the 24th Welsh dined with us and we had quite a cheerful evening with the assistance of the forbidden port.

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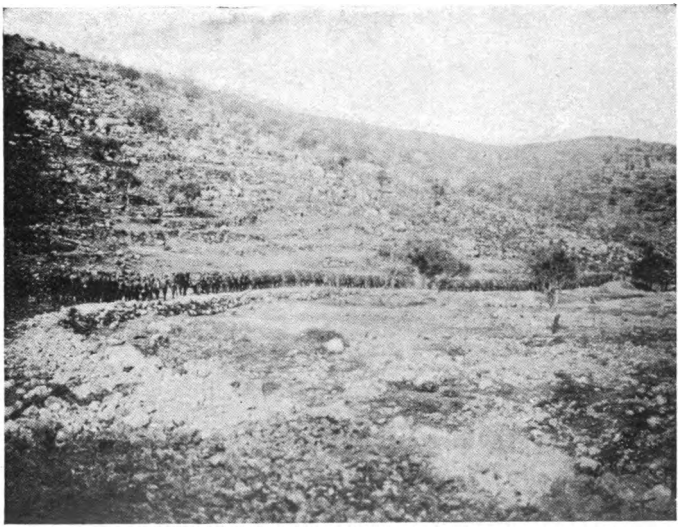
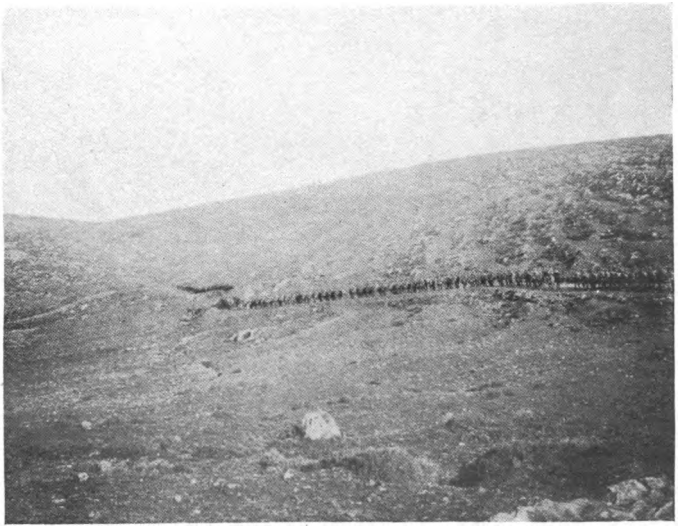


XIII: The Brigade near Ain Sinia, en route to Ludd.



XIV: On the March to Ludd.

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31*st*.—Sigsoldman returned from leave disgustingly cheerful, having concientiously overeaten himself for a week.

A happy event occurred during the morning, in the passage of the first motor-car along our road, and curiously enough it did much to cement the friendship of nations.

The car was packed with Frenchmen and Italians, who in their ignorance elected to follow Offa his Dyke from Biddu to Ram Allah. The 25th R.W.F., whose camp overlooks the road, saw the car coming from afar and turned out to a man to cheer the hardy pioneer. The mixed Vermouths were delighted at the enthusiasm shown by the usually stolid British soldiery for their allies, and were all but bumped out of the car in their efforts to salute with both hands at once.

Feb. 1*st*.—Nemesis has overtaken us in the form of an order that all billets are to be evacuated. I knew this would happen sooner or later, as the men have been catching fever and other diseases in all the towns and villages, but our exodus was hastened by a sick man of the 24th Welsh being reported a typhus case, caught in Beitunia.

Tom Naylor and I accordingly sallied forth to find a bivouac, and selected a spot on a terrace

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sheltered from the S.W., the rainy quarter, which the Turks had camped on. There are some rock tombs there which the Turks had pulled the bones out of and lived in themselves; but there remains too ripe an aroma for them to be much use to us.

Leslie Wilson of the K.S.L.I., who was at Radley with me, came for a farewell dinner previous to setting out to join some irregular corps which is being raised with great secrecy for service, according to the best rumours, in Persia and is generally known as the Dog Potters, after the famous Oxford corps of the same name.

2nd.—The bivouac site we were so pleased with yesterday evening had to be abandoned owing to the discovery of a strata of dead Turk under the spot chosen for the General's tent. I pointed out to Tom that if we pitched the tent right on top of it and made a stone floor nobody would find out about it, but he seemed to think that was just the mistake Crippen made and that the General might take the same view as a British jury, so we settled on another though rather less sheltered part of Palestine.

Our Sergeant Roberts returned from leave in Luxor with his pack full of photographs and his front teeth missing, though he states these

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are being repaired at Ordnance and will shortly be reissued.

3rd.—Lord Kensington and I took horse and rode to Jerusalem. We struck the Nablus road at Ram Allah and rode past Shafat and Er Ram, where "I heard a voice in Ramah calling," though at the moment there were only two Archies shooting at Fritz. Passing below the Mount of Olives, where Corps H.Q. luxuriate in a large German hospice, we left the Damascus gate on our left, traversed the valley of Jehosaphat and fetched up at Fast's hotel. Here you can have quite a passable lunch, though you have to bring your own bread owing to the scarcity of flour in Jerusalem. The local sweet wine is to be avoided unless you are fond of liquid Turkish delight.

We entered the Old City through the gap in the walls made for the Kaiser's entry, only a conqueror being permitted to pass through the gate itself, which the Commander-in-Chief did on his entry six weeks ago.

After dragging Lord K. with difficulty out of several "antica" shops and the Post Office—where we were unsuccessful in obtaining any stamps as the Turks had removed them all—we proceeded with our visit to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The enclosed court with

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the entrance and wall of the church forming one side reminded me strongly of a college chapel and quad at Oxford. Round the court are the hospices of the Crusaders, with low heavily barred doors which good-my-page must have had some difficulty in pushing master through with all his trappings on.

The streets of the town are narrow and often roofed in, and are filled with a multi-coloured crowd of people, who always seem to plant themselves in the middle of the road to do a deal. A great many of the old buildings are quite hidden by the surrounding houses; the hospice of St. John, for instance, is almost swamped by a new German church. The most outstanding and attractive remains are the towers of David and Hippicus and the gates and walls of the city.

The Jew pukka is quite a different article from the European variety, but scarcely more pleasing. They have very white complexions, long oily hair curled in ringlets down their cheeks and furtive eyes, while their fancy in dress generally takes the form of a tightly buttoned morning coat.

Unfortunately we had to leave at half-past three in order to reach home before dusk. A military band was playing on the stand on the Jaffa road as we passed surrounded by an enor-

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mous crowd that quite drowned the efforts of the musicians by their jabbering.

We returned by Nebala, leaving Jerusalem by an old Roman road cut in steps down the hill-side, afterwards joining a road made by the Turks in the Wadi Hannina, and so on to our own road between El Jib and Beitunia.

4th.—Yesterday Brigade H.Q. moved from Beitunia to the new bivouac, east of and below the village, in consequence of which, of course, it rained all the afternoon. To add to this another Turk and two defunct donkeys were discovered behind a wall, which Pte. William Boon, the sanitary expert, thoughtfully disposed of in a rock tomb five yards from my bivouac.

Anyhow we shall probably have to move again, the latest edict being that no camp is to be within eight hundred yards of a village, which we do not comply with. But we are safe until the weather clears and some high authority rides down the road.

5th.—The rain rained again all day and had reduced us to such a state of depression by dinner time that we drank all the port. It was not discovered until too late that we had done the trick completely, and then we thought something had better be done to replenish the stock, in view of the General's parting injunction.

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The difficulty is that the military telegraph is not allowed to be used for private purposes, but a wire was concocted to Guy Rogers at Shepheard's that ought to get through, to wit "Pte. Port not now available at these H.Q. aaa detail Pte. Sandeman to replace forthwith," Sandeman being the purveyor of best mess port.

The Arch-Signaller has not yet notified us that the telegram is cancelled.

6th.—More rain, and in the afternoon some of the healthiest hail-stones I have seen. However, the R.E. say their glass is going up steadily, but it is a Government glass specially designed for the R.E., and would register Fine or Sunny in a thunderstorm to encourage them to get on with it. In spite of the unpromising conditions the natives are beginning to scratch the ground and do their sowing, and quite a lot of wild flowers, particularly primroses, are coming out.

7th.—A really bad day of ceaseless hail, my feet were many degrees colder than ice and were not improved by the soles coming off my new ammunition boots.

The water rushed off the hill-sides in torrents, and the lake below Beitunia spread along the bottom of the valley leaving the road a mere streak of chocolate-coloured mud above the surface.

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Two battalions had to move up to Ram Allah, the 24th R.W.F. all the way from Enab, and arrived like drowned rats to bivouac in a sea of slush.

A certain amount of light comedy was provided by Sigsoldman, who on retiring to rest found a large river reflected in the rays of his lantern running bang through the middle of his bivouac, its source being a waterfall down the rock he fondly imagined to be protecting his home from the stormy blast.

He spent the larger part of the night in consolidation, which any handbook would have told him should have been carried out immediately after the occupation of the position.

8th.—A worse day than yesterday, if possible; the sides of the bivouacs were encrusted with congealed hailstones which gently permeated the canvas and dripped on to one's bed.

In view of the approaching return of the General, the famous firm of Bowen and Bowen was employed on flooring, decorating and generally improving the damp and unattractive tent we trust he may be persuaded to inhabit. They lit a nauseous charcoal fire designed to prevent anyone who may enter from coming forth to tell the tale, and diverted the mountain torrent

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that dashes down the cliff at the back into two rivulets, one at each side of the tent, further designed to render the position unassailable.

9th.—Another day of marked unpleasantness. The General failed to arrive, due to the embankment across the Ghuzze at the Red House having been washed away again, which will continue to happen until they can build a proper bridge.

In the absence of other forms of amusement, I have taken to sending the interpreter round the villages collecting different varieties of Turkish coins, which produces an enormous weight of metal and mostly useless, but they do for poker chips.

10th.—The weather improved slightly and patches of blue sky were visible between showers. The natives say the rain is practically finished, which I hope is true, but the authorities are becoming anxious because there hasn't been the usual amount of rain this year—I can only imagine that other years have more days in them—and unless the supply improves there will not be enough water in the cisterns to keep us going through the summer.

A Court of Inquiry was held to-day into the loss of his "army denture" by a machine gunner. He was coming out with a draft on the *Aragon* when she was torpedoed, but managed to escape

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complete with his denture, and was picked up by a torpedo boat.

Here, in company with the rest of the survivors, he removed his clothes and his denture to dry, a perfectly natural proceeding.

Unfortunately the torpedo boat was then torpedoed herself, and the force of the explosion caused the disappearance of the denture.

What happened to the hardy machine gunner after this is not stated, official interest lapsing with the final loss of the denture. However, the court having carefully considered the evidence, found that no blame attached to any individual and that the cost should be borne by the public.

11*th*.—Thank goodness the wind swung round to the N.E. in the night and we were gladdened by a comparatively warm sun. It is astonishing how quickly the country dries once the sun and wind get on to it; yesterday one could not move a yard without being bogged, and by this evening the going was quite good except in the bottom of the valleys.

Lord K. and I rode to Kulundria on the Nablus road to see the 24th Welsh who arrived there yesterday in a fairly damp condition, having had a three days' march from Latron via Enab and Jerusalem after a visit to the Divisional delousing machine.

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Their present camp is a comparatively dry one, just below the sausage, which they view with some suspicion, being in a direct line to get anything that Fritz may drop on it.

12*th*.—The weather continued good and work went ahead on the road, an impossibility in the late rain. It is now almost completed, there remains only the stretch up to Ram Allah to be repaired, about a mile mostly through vineyards.

The bridge over the Ghuzze is up again and the General will be back to-morrow, always supposing the line is not broken down somewhere else.

Tom went off to inspect the damage done to the local olive groves. We are allowed to buy a certain amount of wood from the natives, who with true business instinct sell it at the approved rate simultaneously proffering a claim against the troops for felling the trees. This is counteracted by Tom weighing the wood brought to our camp on an elderly and inaccurate weighing machine, left stranded in Beitunia when the Flood subsided, and checking it with the estimated weight of the number of trees missing from the plantations. This keeps him busy and gives his mathematical genius a chance to assert itself.

13*th*.—The General returned in the evening,

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trailing Guy Rogers limply in his wake, the latter's mind still running on a farewell dinner of great magnitude given to Leslie Wilson before he left Cairo for Suez.

The General was in considerable form, consented to live in the tent prepared for him, and made no serious comment either on us or the bivouac.

An excellent institution leave, though 'twere desirable that more could attain to it.

The latest attraction in Cairo appears to be dances for Lonely Officers, conducted by the British residents of the neighbourhood to divert the attention of the said Lonely Ones from the striking attractions of the Dago ladies who frequent the ordinary dances. It remains to be seen whether the Lonely Ones will come up to scratch.

14*th*.—One Swan, of the Rifle Brigade, who has come out to Egypt with the intention of joining the Staff, rolled up after lunch to be attached, having received an invitation from the General a few days ago in Cairo.

Guy Rogers provided himself with a mounted job in a Signal Troop while he was away, and intimated that we ought to give him a farewell dinner, I suppose with the idea of recouping himself for the one he gave Leslie.

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We did our best for him; Colonel Clegg also attended, and though the cup that cheers was remarkable only by its absence, some one produced six crackers from a belated Christmas parcel, Tom surprised the company with a brand of cigar known by the inventor as a Curiosidad, and the evening passed well, a special party being detailed, armed with acetylene lamps, to see the warriors home.

15th.—Friend Swan departed as abruptly as he arrived, to take the place of the Brigade Major of the 179th Brigade who was wounded yesterday. A pity, as he was a cheery bird and had a good canvas bath.

Having just settled down comfortably in our new quarters, orders came for the Brigade to move up the Nablus road in reserve to the 60th Division for some show that is in the wind, Jericho I expect.

16th.—It looked like rain all day, but thought better of it and was very cold instead. Unfortunately I can only wear two socks on one foot, for some reason or other my left boot is not large enough to take an extra one, though they were issued to me on the understanding that they were both the same size.

Victor returned from his sojourn at Division with the news that the war is to be over in

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September or October, deciding factor not stated. These prophecies never succeed in raising my moral much, like the Delphic oracle they always leave a loophole of escape for the prophet either in not naming the year or which war is referred to.

Our move is fixed for to-morrow, also the start of the next rain.

17*th.*—We moved in the morning—oddly enough under quite pleasant conditions—through Ram Allah to Er Ram, where the Brigade went into bivouac round the edge of a basin with the camels barracked in the middle.

Tom and I walked on to Jeba after lunch to call on the 181st Brigade and find out exactly what they are going to do. They have a very long advance to Jebel Kuruntul just N.W. of Jericho, and we shall probably be required to relieve them either during or immediately after it.

The country east of Er Ram is very high, steep hills and wadis even more sheer than the average, extremely difficult for guns and transport.

The object of the expedition is to drive the Turks east of Jordan, seize or destroy the supplies of corn at Jericho and sink the fleet of motor and other boats on the Dead Sea. The

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Intelligence Department also want forty-eight hours in Jericho, presumably to see if they can discover Joshua's antifortification recipe.

It will be interesting, but probably fairly hard work as Jericho is at least seven miles from the present outpost line and well protected by natural obstacles to movement.

18*th*.—The General and I rode to Mukmas (Micmash) to reconnoitre the country for the advance. General Shea, commanding the 60th Division, was out there as well as all our C.O's and company commanders, so we made a brave show on the various skylines.

The country is higher but the hills generally less rocky and terraced than those further west, and there are glades and clumps of vegetation in the wadis that give the place quite a cheerful aspect.

Ras el Tawil, which the 181st Brigade are attacking as their main objective to-morrow is a big hill well supplied with Turks, so I should not be surprised if we came into the hunt when they have taken it, and carry on to Kuruntul on the line of cliffs looking over the Jordan valley.

Mukmas is a small village on top of a hill, just east of which the 181st Brigade have moved their H.Q. to, in a very pleasant little wadi.

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I was going to look at the guards found by the Brigade in Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the afternoon, but the reconnaissance took too long and I did not get back in time.

19*th*.—The 181st Brigade took Splash Hill and Ras el Tawil at daybreak without heavy loss; the Turks on Tawil did not wait for them.

We were ordered up to Mukmas in the morning, whence I rode on to Ras el Tawil to find out what was going on and how the line ran. Everything was very quiet, and beyond putting over a few shells from a mountain battery the Turk was not taking much interest.

There is an extraordinary view from Tawil; the ground falls steeply in a series of jumbled ridges and crinkly hills down to Jericho and the Jordan valley, standing out bright green amid the surrounding grey, with the mountains of Moab breaking through the low clouds beyond.

The barren grey hills round the Dead Sea, wreathed in swirling mist, are just like pictures of Dante's Inferno, an effect which was added to by columns of smoke from the burning stores and shipping at Rijm el Bahr on the north shore.

The temperature rises several degrees even between Er Ram and Mukmas, and it must be quite hot in the sub-tropical valley.

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I was kept busy all the evening and most of the night with orders and guides for our battalions, which are moving forward in support to the further advance of the 181st Brigade to-morrow.

20th.—Progress was a bit slow to-day, more from the nature of the country than from the opposition met with, but as the 181st were rather weary, the K.S.L.I. with the 25th R.W.F. in support were ordered to relieve their right flank battalion and carry on the advance.

By the time the relief was complete it was too late to push on, so the K.S.L.I. are making ground with patrols during the night preparatory to getting into any remaining Turks at daylight to-morrow.

The Brigade H.Q. bivouac was pitched under the west side of Tawil, fortunately before the rain started. Our Divisional cable is now thirty miles in length and the line to the advanced battalions about five miles, which gives one some idea of the nature of the fighting and the general isolation of everybody.

21st.—Spent most of last night at the telephone. The K.S.L.I. pushed on fast and occupied the group of hills in front of them with patrols just after midnight; but the Turks must have withdrawn as soon as it was dark, for no opposi-

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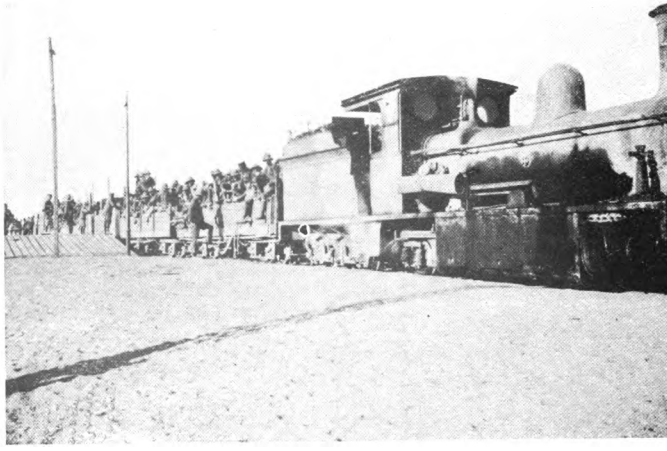
XV: General Allenby, near Ain Arik.



XVI: The Brigade entraining for Kantara.

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tion was encountered and only one Turkish patrol was seen after daybreak.

The K.S.L.I. occupied the cliffs overlooking the plain during the morning, while the 181st Brigade established themselves on Jebel Kuruntul shortly afterwards, and the 180th Brigade on our right took Khirbet Kakun, both on the edge of the bluff.

I rode out early with the General to the outpost line. The rain has made the tracks very slippery and the going was particularly bad over the shoulder of Tawil, where the mare slipped up and we both had a narrow escape from being deposited in the wadi several hundred feet below.

From that point eastward the hills are still high but rounded, for the most part not over steep, and the valleys are broad and covered with luxuriant grass and all sorts of wild flowers, anemones and occasionally broom, much hotter than the country we have come from and seemingly much better land altogether. But there must be some fly in the ointment, because there is not a single village in the nine miles that separate Mukmas from Jericho, and the only building I saw was a monastery on the side of the cliff just south of Kuruntul. I expect the trouble is that after an early spring the place is absolutely

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burnt up. Jericho itself is supposed to be almost impossible for white men in the hot weather, and even the natives there are very low and decadent specimens.

From the edge of the cliff, where the outpost line now runs, we had a splendid view of the valley. It is seven or eight miles in breadth, enclosed by the mountains of Moab and Gilead to the east and by the Dead Sea on the south. The Jordan runs between steep banks, the water only visible where the river bends. Jericho is a pretty little place with white houses and red roofs, much like Beersheba, but surrounded by trees and green fields. The cavalry, who had been co-operating on the right flank between Nebi Musa [1] and the Dead Sea, were scattered in groups round the town, and we could see them as far forward as the near bank of the river.

Before we had had half enough time to absorb the picture below us, a great bank of mist came rolling up from the Dead Sea and completely filled the valley, so that we could see nothing. The mist was warm and steamy; I I don't suppose it is ever cold down there, eight hundred feet below sea-level.

When the ransacking of Jericho is complete we are to withdraw to the line Rummon-Ras el

[1] The tomb of Moses.

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Tawil — Jebel Ekteif, though it goes against the grain to give up any country taken from the enemy, especially one which would provide grazing for any number of animals and would be a much better training ground than the stone hills round Jerusalem.

The cliffs could be held by one man and a boy and the Turks would never be able to cross Jordan again.

22*nd*.—The rain came down hard and stuck to it all day. I spent a considerable portion of the morning in bed to avoid the general unpleasantness and make up for lost time during the last few days.

The battalions made roads for the guns and cleared the battlefields on the various hill-tops, a pretty chilly amusement in the driving rain.

It appears very little was found in Jericho in the way of corn or stores. I don't know whether the Intelligence people were more fortunate.

23*rd*.—The gentle rain continued to descend upon the just and unjust alike, and I was sent forth into it to meet General Shea at Mukmas and conduct him to Brigade H.Q. for a conference.

We were glad to hear that it has been decided not to give up the ground made, but to hold the line of cliffs where the outposts are at present,

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To-morrow the Brigade returns to Er Ram to resume its stone-cracking pastime on the main Nablus road. It will be a relief to leave this place; it is the highest point for some miles round and no cloud passes it without being rent asunder and the contents poured into our bivouac.

24th.—The Brigade, less the K.S.L.I. who remained for one day to work on the gun road, returned to Er Ram and back to its tents.

I rode down to Kuruntul with the General to resume our interrupted inspection of the plain. It was well worth the trouble.

The monastery at Kuruntul is an extraordinary place. The hill is supposed to be the Mount of the Temptation—its name is a corruption of the Latin quarantana—and to commemorate it somebody built this monastery half-way up its face. The cliff is absolutely sheer and even overhanging where the long flat building clings to it, looking like a fly on a wall and liable to topple forward at any moment.

A few hundred yards to the south in an angle of the escarpment is a nest of rock-cut cells at the very top of the cliff, at a height that must have brought home the precariousness of life to the nimble hermit with some force. It makes one quite dizzy to look over the edge.

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Almost directly below is a long mound called Tel es Sultan, covered with ruins, which must be the ancient Jericho. I much wanted to go and dig in it forthwith, but it would take hours to climb down the cliff and up again, apart from the time required to excavate a buried city with a borrowed entrenching tool.

The Turk was a negligible quantity. His tents were visible a long way off beyond Jordan, but there are no enemy left on this side of the river, and his guns seem too far away to do any damage.

25*th*.—The weather was fine for a change, enabling us to start work under fairly good conditions except for the mud.

General Girdwood came to lunch; owing to our having been so far away from the rest of the Division it is the first time we have seen him for nearly two months. It seems likely from what he said that our next Odyssey will take us to the line north of Bireh in relief of the 53rd Division. I had hoped we might be left in peace for a week or so; however, my leave is at last fixed for next Wednesday, so the military outlook for the near future interests me not at all.

Frank Beavan came back from hospital after nearly getting the worst of a bout of dysentery.

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I was particularly glad to see him as his timely arrival has made my leave possible.

26th.—The General went off to visit the 53rd Division at Ram Allah, while I passed the morning sounding various sources likely to disgorge a motor conveyance of some kind to take myself and Lord Kensington, who is also going on leave, to Jerusalem, where we can board a lorry for Ramleh. The Field Ambulance tendered a motor ambulance capable of holding two persons sitting or lying, into which we hope to insert ourselves, our retainers and a certain amount of kit.

It seems that we are for another show before long, and it is a good thing I managed to fix my leave at this juncture. Padding the hoof on the trail of Joshua is a pastime requiring the agility of a mountain goat combined with a fondness for bully beef, neither of which is a particular failing of mine, and an occasional recess is necessary.

March 11th.—No one appreciates leave more than I do, but I must admit it is very undesirable to return in the middle of a battle which has been going on for three days, with everybody dead beat and expecting you to get down to it like a two year old, regardless of the fact that you have been travelling for two days under the

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most primitive conditions and are still suffering from the effects of leave.

Such was my misfortune. I fetched up this evening and found the Brigade had just finished a seven-mile advance along the Nablus road. They were three days over it, the Turk put up a good show as usual, and was only pushed off one or two particularly precipitous hill-tops after hard hand-to-hand fighting.

There were a certain number of casualties, mostly in the K.S.L.I.; Aldersey, some time adjutant, was killed during a Turkish counter-attack on Burj Lisaneh, and Glazebrook, who had just been awarded the D.S.O. for the defence of Et Tireh, was killed by a shell in the Wadi Medway early in the proceedings, a great loss to the regiment.

It poured all night, Bowen was lost and my bivouac failed to materialise, so the only thing to do was to read through the enormous sheaf of wires and operation orders handed over to me by Frank and try to answer the telephone intelligently whenever it rang.

12*th*.—More rain. The beastliness of this climate is all the more noticeable when one has just come back from Egypt and undiluted sunshine.

After lunch I went round the outpost line with

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the General. In the first place we went to where we thought the line was, but were dissuaded by a Turk with a rifle up an olive tree, and having fallen back in confusion were chased by a 5.9 off-loading aimlessly and at irregular intervals round the outposts.

There is nothing to be seen but hills in every direction, dotted with a few scattered villages and ruins and occasionally a sparse patch of cultivation. I suppose we shall go on doing these advances until we come up against the Haifa-Nablus line and then there will be a set piece.

13th.—The 230th Brigade extend their right to take over our line to-morrow, and I conducted a Cook's tour including General Bowker and Buxton his Brigade-Major round the outposts in the morning. We came in for a good wetting and the mist prevented any observation, so beyond a morning of violent exercise, the expedition was a failure.

The afternoon was enlivened by the efforts of the gunners to manhandle a battery on to a terrace half-way up our mountain, finally accomplished with the aid of pulleys and guy ropes secured to the olive trees, and much mutual abuse.

14th.—The day started with a promise of fine

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weather, but rapidly deteriorated into the usual wind and rain.

The 230th Brigade took over the outpost line and our battalions went into bivouac on the Nablus road. We had intended to move Brigade H.Q. back towards Ain Sinia in the afternoon, and I sallied out to call on the R.E., thus hoping to escape the upheaval of moving house. But on reaching the spot selected I found it swept and garnished except for a dead horse, and eventually discovered that as it had come on to rain particularly hard, they had not moved beyond pulling down my bivouac and allowing the floor to become thoroughly boggy before re-erecting it. And worse, the Turk, disliking the guns pulled up the hillside yesterday, was searching for them in his usual painstaking way and thoroughly put the wind up us. At length, however, one landed in the middle of the bivouac vacated half an hour previously by the M.G. Company, which so pleased the Bashi-bazouk with the gun that he held his hand and fired no more.

15th.—The battalions returned to the ancient and approved pastime of shovelling mud in the rain and repairing the embankment of the road, which the Turks blew up in numerous places as well as destroying all the bridges and culverts.

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Having with considerable judgment selected a rather longer interval than usual between showers, we made a dash for our new home and reached it just in time. The bivouacs were pitched on a broad terrace covered with olives, on the slope of the hill below the village of Selwad, one of the prettiest places the caravan has yet rested in.

We devoted the afternoon to honest toil, excavating a level floor for the mess tent. The homely scene was, however, quite spoilt by Sigsoldman, more accustomed to the delicate manipulation of a buzzer, driving his pick smartly into the back of Victor's hand. Misfortunes never come singly, and the unfortunate Victor having recovered sufficiently to walk, fell over a rock and sprained his ankle on the way back from the Field Ambulance. Thus was our Staff Captain rendered unserviceable. Indents to replace will be submitted accordingly.

16*th*.—Sigsoldman fell a victim to a sore throat, a remarkably prompt retribution for his untidy pick work. His efforts to consume his usual quota of nourishment—his appetite being quite unimpaired—hampered by a defective swallow, were more than pathetic.

The rain carried on all day and overflowing

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the encircling ditch poured across the floor of the tent under Victor's bed, which fortunately for him, as he spent the day in it, is on a stretcher, and was absorbed in mine. By way of cheering the invalid up everyone assembled in the tent before dinner and sang the latest pre-war songs accompanied by the General who has a very nice note on the comb.

17*th*.—Another day of complete unpleasantness and absolutely nothing to do. Colonel Spence-Jones, the orphan boy, has just been given a month's leave at home, the most the leave merchants could be persuaded into parting with.

Victor kept to his bed, though sufficiently recovered to smoke the remains of last night's cigar before breakfast. I occupied the day in building a very nicely designed stone floor to the tent and digging a drain round my bed.

18*th*.—The weather improved after a certain amount of rain in the morning, and the General, Frank, and I climbed to the top of the hill to look at the Selwad defences, part of the Turk's late outpost line. The summit of the hill, round like most, is encircled with trenches and sangars built on the edge of a cliff about twenty feet high; how our people managed to assault it in the dark I can't imagine, but the K.S.L.I.

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brought it off just before dawn and pushed the Turks out with the bayonet.

One would have thought the enemy were fed up with continued night surprises, but they never do any patrolling, so I suppose they like them.

19th.—Rode round the battalions with quite a pleasant sun overhead and no wind. Their chief worry at the moment is the state of the men's boots, most of which have no soles at all, and some are so bad that they have practically ceased to exist and their owners have to be left in camp with sandbags tied round their feet when the working parties go out.

I found Topham of the 24th R.W.F. sitting in his tent alone with a bottle of fizz, an unusual sight in these parts where such luxury generally draws a large crowd, but the happy result is always the same.

Colonel Clegg with whom I had lunch told me that some of his men had found a woman with her head cut off in Jufna, a village passed in the last advance. She was almost white, probably an Armenian, as there is a small Greek church in the place.

20th.—The Duke of Connaught presented decorations to officers and men of the 10th and 74th Divisions at Ain Sinia in the morning; quite a successful show, the weather was splen-

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did, everybody turned up in the best clothes they could borrow and the 10th Division provided a really smart guard of honour.

Frank and I, not being officially concerned with the entertainment, sat on a wall nearby and counted the number of performers that fell over their spurs in approaching the table.

One of the native guides we have attached to us dragged the Mukhtar of Selwad into the camp in the afternoon, with an enormous collection of arms, guns about seven feet long, pistols and knives. I selected a dangerous looking dagger with a silver mounted handle as a souvenir, but the other items of the collection were much too big to carry about, and as they constitute no danger to anyone except the owner, we magnanimously allowed the villagers to remove them.

21*st*.—The General and I passed the afternoon trying to track down the nest of a couple of ravens that are always to be seen flying about the hillside. We scaled some very formidable rocks and cliffs in the course of our wanderings but found no sign of the nest.

I suppose the country is beginning to look at its best now, there is a wonderful variety of wild flowers of all colours, the commonest and also the prettiest are the large crimson

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anemones, though the mauve and white cyclamen that grows in the crevices of the rocks is very hard to beat. There is also quite a lot of red tulips and yellow crocuses, and occasional clumps of broom, all growing together in patches on the more sheltered hillsides and presenting a brilliant contrast to the prevailing grey of the rocks.

22nd.—We climbed up Burj Bardawil in the evening, the next hill south of ours, surmounted by the remains of a castle of King Baldwin of Jerusalem. One can quite clearly trace the outline of the whole building and in some places the walls are still thirty feet high, built of huge square blocks and traversed by Norman arches. The big hall with a fire-place on one side is still covered by its original vaulted roof and was lived in by the Turks, who put up a good fight before being turned out of the place by the 230th Brigade. It is to be hoped the shade of the old gentleman appreciated the good work.

23rd.—The General has developed a habit of climbing at least one mountain a day, which though very good for you is extremely tiring and incidentally very bad for your boots.

This evening we staggered up Burj Lisaneh, well over three thousand feet high and incredibly stony. There is a fine view from the

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top northward over the country leading up to Nablus and Mt. Hermon beyond, and to the east of the hills across Jordan.

The ruins which cover quite a large part of the hill-top seem to be Phœnician or Jewish from the bevelled edges of the stones and the square doorways, but it is hard to tell what the building was, possibly one of the High Places the prophet warns one against.

24th.—According to its usual practice on the Sabbath, the weather broke and we had all the usual aquatic sports and tent-pitching competitions.

Victor and I sallied out between the showers to ascertain the value of the German hand-grenade, which the Turk always leaves behind in large quantities, for blasting operations.

The first one was most effective and brought down no small part of the mountain, completely blocking the path to Selwad. We were unable to remove the obstruction as the rest of the bombs were duds. One can get quite a lot of amusement by blowing up a loose piece of cliff on top of a hill and watching the disintegrated parts gambolling down the terraces.

25th.—More rain and general unpleasantness; this is going to turn out a good year for the water supply.

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The 229th Brigade brought off a very successful raid on Khirbet Amurieh last night, which accounts for the midnight activity of Salvo Jack, the gunner who lurks in the bottom of our wadi.

They caught a number of Turks including seven officers. There was an eighth, but apparently he spoke English and made the mistake of addressing insulting remarks to the escort while returning through the enemy's barrage.

26th.—Tom Naylor came back from leave without any port and three days late, with the time honoured excuse that the railway was washed away. Just my luck that it did not rain a drop while I was in Egypt.

A letter came round to-day, saying that any Staff Officer who wanted a rest could apply for a job at home for six months. Victor and I both agreed that we were done to a turn and could only be saved from a lingering death by a tour at home; but even such an end would be preferable to the delicate remarks the General would undoubtedly be roused into making when the suggestion was put to him, so we are going on with the war.

27th.—Quite a pleasant day for a change. Victor, thinking the omens good, had the cheek

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to ask for another go of leave, though he has not been back two months from his last effort, and actually persuaded the General to give his consent to the nefarious enterprise. Having recovered from the surprise attendant on his success, he is making all haste to push off before the decision can be reconsidered.

The 53rd Division has gone down to Ludd to refit, also possibly to form part of a new corps with the 7th Indian Division lately arrived from Mesopotamia and the 3rd Indian which is reported to be on its way.

Had a letter from Leslie Wilson, posted in Bombay. No news of his destination, but an awful account of the shortage of liquid refreshment while going down the Red Sea, due, I should imagine, to their having drunk it all before they got there.

28*th*.—Rode with the General and Tom Naylor to the bottom of Tell Asur, where we left our horses and climbed to the top, which offers a fine view to the north over the country we shall cross during the next push, due to start in a month or so. The great attraction of fighting in this country is that the periods of unpleasantness are short and sharp, and when done with leave you to luxuriate—more or less, according to the state of the weather and your clothes—

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in a condition of otium cum dignitate, exception being made for roadmaking activities.

Victor, accompanied by Trooper Waugh, his servant, in happier days pusher-out at the Coliseum, set out unostentatiously for the flesh pots of Egypt, hoping to reach them before any restriction or rationing is imposed, which is rumoured to be not unlikely.

29*th*.—Went out with the General to make a reconnaissance of the country in front of the outposts. The mist came up so thickly that finally we could see nothing, but I am sure the General's habit of changing his waistcoat on the skyline will get us into trouble sooner or later.

A Turkish officer, complete with servant and kit, gave himself up this morning. Possibly he is the officer newly selected for the command of the King of the Hedjaz's army, as it was reported a short time ago that the appointment was vacant, but had been offered to the General commanding the XXth Turkish Corps, from whom an answer was expected as soon as our operations against the Hedjaz railway at Amaan allowed him a moment for consideration. A fine training ground, the Turkish Army.

30*th*.—This bivouac is becoming much too popular with the natives, a regular swarm of them besieged the place all day. They look on

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us as sent here expressly to attend to their comfort and provide them with anything they may be short of.

One old bird came to say that he was desirous of becoming Mukhtar of Selwad, but that the ungrateful dogs would not have him—a very deserving case.

Another gentleman, who had to proceed to Ram Allah to be interviewed by the Political Intelligence Officer as he had just returned to his village through the Turkish lines, declined to go unless a motor-car was placed at his disposal, and eventually had to be pushed across country by an escort.

But the limit was reached this evening when a disreputable old blighter came and sat himself down in the doorway of my tent and said he was tired and what would we do for him? In spite of the strict orders that nothing is on any account to be done that may hurt the feelings of the natives, I listened with joy to his lamentations as the guard thrust him over the edge of the terrace.

Frank Beavan left in the morning for Jerusalem, where he is to understudy someone on the G branch at Corps.

31*st*.—I had intended to spend last night and to-day—Easter Sunday—camped in the valley

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of Jehosaphat with Bowen and Bradbury, my groom, but the weather has been so inferior and Jerusalem is so far away now that I thought better of it.

We rode down to the 25th R.W.F. for early service, after which the rain prevented our doing anything.

Phillips came back from Egypt with the fell news that there is not a bottle of port in the country, due apparently to some error on the part of the shipping authorities in giving priority to ammunition.

The Turks gave a small display in the afternoon and tried to attack the 230th Brigade near Sinjil, but they got very wet and attracted so much attention that they faded away into the mist before reaching the outposts.

April 1st.—We sent Victor a 1st of April telegram in cipher telling him to return immediately—on conclusion of his leave.

A wire like that is generally very effective, the recipient deciphers the first groups and finds he is ordered to return at once, and is so overcome with anxiety to discover the reason that he probably makes a hash of the following groups containing the key of the mystery. He then has to start all over again and having finally made out the message spends

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the rest of the day full of hatred for the sender.

Walked over Burj Bardawil to Division, on the Nablus road near Ain Sinia, and stayed to lunch.

The 52nd Division are off to France, and it seems that we shall be moving down to Ludd soon, though whether this is the stepping-stone to France or merely means that we take the place of the 52nd Division in the XXIst Corps I don't know. I don't think anyone is particularly anxious to go to France except the General, who fancies there is more scope for genius there, but it has its points, there is less discomfort and you have a chance of going home occasionally.

I heard the cuckoo on the way home; as a matter of fact I am quite sure I heard it yesterday, but the General would have it it was a camel coming back from water.

2nd.—Rode down the road with the General to Division, where we found out definitely that we are for France, and everyone on the Division in an awful stew, none of them having been there except Colonel Allen, G.S.O.i. Of course, it is a dead secret and France is referred to as "Another Front" or "A Different Scene of Activity," prefaced by the sort of noise a grand father clock makes before it strikes.

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I hope we shall go via Tarento. I should like to see the land of the Icecreamers before the Germans turn them out of it; and there is a better chance of not being torpedoed if one goes that way.

3rd.—The Battalions finished work on the road to-day and rested from their labours.

It is really sickening having to leave this show just when it is opening up and becoming interesting, and the country is a splendid one for fighting in. Of course, we have been lucky in fighting over the places of greatest historical interest, but I should very much like to have seen Damascus.

The change to France will be a sharp contrast. There there is nothing of interest to amuse you between times; here the country is quite wild, nobody knows much about it, and even the natives are an attractive sideshow, an accusation no one could level at the inhabitants of Northern France.

However, it is something of a compliment being chosen to go, as I have no doubt the Divisional Special Order will say when the sharp edge has worn off the secrecy—"It is a matter of satisfaction to all ranks——etc."

4th.—We had a test for one patrol from each battalion in the morning, and sat on the Turk-

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ish sangars on Selwad hill while they worked across the boulder-strewn country from Yebrud. Although we watched the approaches with glasses it was very difficult to spot them at all until they reached the open ground at the foot of the hill; it is practically impossible to see a man moving slowly among the rocks; there is no doubt the attacker has all the advantage in this country.

I believe the trans-Jordan natives are very fed up with our late raid on the Hedjaz railway, because the Turks, of course, returned as soon as our columns had withdrawn and are now holding daily throat-slitting parades at Es Salt to punish the tribes for not molesting us. It does seem rather rough luck on them.

5th.—Arose with the lark, took horse to Ain Sinia and thence by lorry to have a last look at Jerusalem.

I arrived at 11 o'clock and had lunch at the Grand Hotel, a less imposing establishment than one would suppose from the name, with Barnes and David of the 24th Welsh, who had luckily brought some bread, as I forgot mine.

After lunch I dashed at the double down the narrow street that leads to the hotel and successfully passed through the main body of guides attendant in the said street. By the time I

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reached the Mosque of Omar I had shaken off all pursuit and was able to spend the afternoon quite peacefully.

The mosque is called the Dome of the Rock and is built round a huge slab of stone on which Abraham is supposed to have put Isaac for the sacrifice. It is the centre of Moslem worship in the city, and the dust swept once a year from the stone slab is carried away by the pilgrims that visit the place.

The turquoise blue mosaic which covers the outside of the mosque is a picturesque dash of colour against the dark background of Scopus, the ridge where Titus' legions lay during the siege.

The old parts of the city, Zion and Moriah, two adjoining hills, are bordered by the valleys of Hinnon—part of which was Gehenna—and Jehosaphat, through which ran the brook Kedron. The Jericho road runs along the side of the valley of Jehosaphat with the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane above it, and the tombs of the Virgin Mary, Absolom, and St. Stephen below.

All this you can see in panorama by walking along the top of the massive walls round the temple enclosure—now occupied by the mosques of Omar and El Aksa—which were built by

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the Crusaders with battlements and embrasures dominating the sheer sides of the hills and the narrow beds of the wadis.

I left the Temple area by way of the Jew's Wailing Place, filled with the noise of weird lamentation and many beggars. The wailers lean against the wall which is said to be the sole remnant of Solomon's Temple, and howl mournfully with streaming eyes, thus drawing one's attention from the open-palmed advance of the beggars. There may be some real feeling in this expression of grief, but it is mostly a matter of custom and provides fine scope for mendicants.

Following the Via Dolorosa and inquiring the way at intervals I came to the Pool of Bethesda. It is only partially excavated and is covered in by a church superimposed and itself in ruins, so that at present there is not very much to see. Descending a stone stairway one reaches a large bath-shaped place full of mosquitoes with vaulted roof above inky water and an atmosphere of must and slime.

Situated further along the Via Dolorosa and much more interesting is what they call the "Ecce Homo" arch, the street gateway of the Prætorium. It is enclosed in a convent, which somewhat frightened me, but I rang the bell

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and was positively dragged in by a friendly French nun who proved a most instructive guide. The gateway itself is considerably obscured by an enormous altar in the chapel, but it is a fine specimen of Roman architecture and you can imagine quite easily what the rest of the building looked like.

In the crypt, the floor of which was then the street level, are paving stones marked in squares with a game very much like Crown and Anchor, which was probably as popular in a Roman cohort as in a British regiment, and as unpopular with the military authorities.

Finally I made my way to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre to have a small rosary blessed which I had bought during the afternoon. I got hold of an old Greek priest who consented to attend to the matter for a consideration. He led the way into a side chapel, gabbled some words out of a book of Latin, sprinkled some holy water on the rosary with a complete lack of interest, accepted the fee and departed.

I must admit Jerusalem as the birth-place of one's religion is worse than disappointing; so little is authentic—or rather there is so much that obviously isn't—everything is so tawdry and given up to petty disputes between ridiculous factions such as Armenians, Greeks, and

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Romans, that the whole thing seems make-believe.

The temples of Luxor and Karnak, with their massive grandeur, spaciousness, and simplicity of design one could understand and admire as the home of a great religion. In Jerusalem you certainly find little to inspire you save the natural magnificence of the surrounding country

6th.—We struck camp at 8 o'clock, assisted by the usual crowd of natives that appear from nowhere and hover like hawks preparatory to pouncing upon the incinerator as soon as you show any sign of moving. No sooner had we started than it began to pour with rain, and we settled into a thoroughly wet bivouac at Ain Sinia. To-morrow the Brigade begins the trek to Ludd, Brigade H.Q. moving to-day so as to be in position for the march to-morrow.

General Girdwood and General Hext, the C.R.A., dined with us in the evening. In view of the fact that it rained the whole time and that the unfortunate mess staff had had no time to erect any cover over their kitchen, a vote of thanks was passed for the excellent dinner they put up, though I don't know whether that was much consolation to them.

7th.—We started at 7 o'clock with a very promising outlook for the water supply, but it

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cleared later and we had quite a pleasant march, though the road back to Ram Allah is passing bad and alternates between deep mud and loose boulders.

We went into bivouac on our old road, Offa's Dyke, midway between Ram Allah and Ain Arik on the spot known as Turk's Grave.

The General and I, after considerable hesitation owing to the state of the road, accepted an invitation to dine at Corps in the German hospice on the Mount of Olives. Much to the General's annoyance they sent the product of Henry Ford for us and we got in somewhat the worse for wear in about an hour.

Frank Beaven showed me round the place before dinner. He is being sent back to accompany us to France, rather hard luck, as he really looked like getting a job after many months of understudying.

The hospice is an enormous place built of white stone round an open quadrangle. There is a fine chapel, the tone of which, however, is somewhat lowered by a sort of Punch cartoon on the roof portraying the Kaiser and his wife surrounded by angels.

8th.—The voice of Sigsoldman was heard calling the faithful to food at sunrise and we trekked betimes. It was a topping day, and

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we had a comfortable march, without incident except that one wagon fell over the edge of the road into a wadi and held up the traffic just as the C.-in-C. was passing with a procession of motors, which was the more unfortunate as the road just there was planted with a large quantity of the most mature dead camels I ever saw.

It is the best road we have been on for a long time, made by the 10th Division, and runs mostly along the bottom of wadis in very broken country. Ain Arik is a pretty little village almost in the bed of the Wadi Ain Arik, with a running stream, fruit trees in blossom and a large grove of pomegranates.

The end of the march brought us close under Suffa, and we went into bivouac just short of Beit Sira. The country here is a good deal more forward and much warmer than Jerusalem and the hills to the north. The corn is a foot high and the grass is dotted with a profusion of wild flowers.

9th.—The Brigade marched early, through Beit Nuba and Amwas to Latron. We reached our destination at half-past nine in order to have the remainder of the day to rest in preparatory to the long march across the plain to-morrow.

The weather is perfect, if anything a little hot for marching, and with every mile westward

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the sun seems to gain strength. We are now practically out of the hills, and I must admit I am very sorry to leave them; they are desolate and somewhat exacting but very attractive.

Victor came back from Cairo looking the complete Staff Captain in an awful little hat which he is very proud of. However, he brought us some prawns and soles fresh from Alexandria, which softened the General's remarks anent his head-dress.

10*th*.—Started at half-past five, before the heat of the sun was noticeable. The road runs straight across the plain to Ramleh and thence on to Jaffa.

Kubab is the first village out of Latron, and just past it on the south side of the road lies Abu Shusheh, a stony hill containing the tombs of the Kings of Canaan.

It was very hot later in the morning, and thanks to an idiot of a military policeman the Brigade took the wrong turning of two leading out of Ramleh and required a lot of extricating owing to the cactus hedges preventing free manœuvre. The General fell on the unfortunate Wally Phillips who was leading and left him a mangled pulp, directing at the same time some rather unnecessary remarks at me, which I passed on to

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an A.S.C. wallah who tried to break the column with his lorries at the railway crossing.

However, we reached our bivouac at Surafend, some three miles west of Ramleh, without further mishap, and I was fortunate enough to purchase an unusually good brand of orange which, applied to the General at the critical moment, quite restored the situation.

After lunch, the General, Tom and I went into Jaffa in a car borrowed from G.H.Q. at Bir Salem. There are orange plantations at intervals all along the road and the air is heavy with the smell of the blossom and mimosa.

The town is quite pretty, the old part standing high above the sea and the small harbour where they off-load in surf boats. As a matter of fact there was no surf at all to-day and the sea was like a mill-pond.

The houses are mostly white-roofed with red tiles, a very attractive colour scheme surrounded by green foliage under a brilliant sun. The main street through the square, where you can buy twelve enormous oranges for 2½d. is wide and clean. It leads on the north side to the Jewish colony, a pleasant neighbourhood of wide streets, good houses, and ladies dressed, in the eyes of one fresh from the mountains at any rate, in the latest fashions.

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The General, Lord Kensington, Colonel and Major Lonsdale and myself dined with General Lloyd, commanding L. of C., in the convent at Ramleh, which served Napoleon as H.Q. for some time during his advance on Acre. The dinner, a farewell one, was a great success, and we had a most cheery evening.

11th.—The 24th and 25th R.W.F. entrained at Ludd (Lydda), a mile or two north of Ramleh, surrounded by huge groves of orange trees.

Spent the morning at the station pushing unwilling mules into trucks. After lunch, having borrowed a car, Victor and I drove into Jaffa, which he had not seen.

The General and I went down by the passenger train in the evening and after a very comfortable night reached Kantara in the early morning. Brigade H.Q. established itself in a suitable piece of desert some way east of the standing camp and slightly less dusty. It is very hot and sun helmets are being issued to the men again.

13th.—Spent most of last night at the station meeting the rest of the Brigade and Victor, who arrived at 5 o'clock.

I don't know how long we shall stay here, but we cannot embark until the ships which have taken the 52nd Division to Marseilles return,

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so we may be here for some weeks, unless we are sent on to wait at Alexandria.

14*th*.—Victor and I rode across the Canal to see Ritson, who commands a Gyppie battalion during patrol work on the shores of Lake Menzala, with H.Q. a couple of miles along the Canal in the direction of Ballah.

He has built himself a most palatial mud residence with hot and cold water and beer laid on. We had a very pleasant bathe in the Canal, which is just below the verandah, and rode back after tea in the cool of the evening.

The General went to dine with some one known as the Subaltern's Guide to Ruin who runs one of the Infantry bases at Kantara, and we had a small dinner party on our own.

15*th*.—Who should I meet in the main street of the camp but old Watters, whom I haven't seen since the palmy days at Oxford, now disguised as that Backbone of the British Army, the Subaltern Officer. Invited him to come and share the fatted Machonochie to-morrow.

Victor and I repeated our visit to Ritson, arriving in time for dinner by way of a change. The penalty for possessing attractive quarters is the extreme friendliness of one's friends, but Ritson bore up bravely and after dinner took us for a drive in his car along the Canal to El

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Kab. They are building a steel swing-bridge to carry the railway over the Canal a mile or so north of Kantara, designed to save all the present delay in transhipping between the west and east stations.

16*th*.—The General interviewed all the newly joined officers in the morning—there are a lot of them, as all the battalions are being completed up to 35 officers and 960 other ranks—and gave them his views on the war in general and on themselves in particular.

Watters came to lunch and we spent the afternoon bucking about better days. As a matter of fact it was a great relief to him to find some one willing to listen to his well-known impersonations and he got most of them off his chest, including a lifelike representation of a discourse by John Hill on the universal unpleasantness of his friends; poor old Gussie recounting his attempt to commit suicide under the 8.40 express; and the lesser platitudes of the Dons' Common Room.

17*th*.—The Lena Ashwell concert party gave a concert to the Brigade in the evening. It was a very good show, we had every turn twice and gave them a fizz dinner at Brigade H.Q. afterwards. There was considerable competition amongst members of the Brigade for the dinner

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part of the business, ladies not being articles of store at Kantara, and invitations had to be limited to Commanding Officers.

25th.—The General came into my tent before breakfast some days ago and remarked that if I didn't hurry I should miss the 9.15. So I took the hint and reached Cairo in time for lunch with Wally Phillips in tow.

The General, Victor, and Sigsoldman appeared a day or two later, and Brigade H.Q. closed at Kantara and reopened at Shepheard's, a locality I can thoroughly recommend to anyone in search of a site for a Brigade Office.

Hannibal, the bar-tender, invented a new cocktail for us yclept the Broken Spur (our Divisional Sign, indicative of the chequered career of the Yeomen). The General, on the top of his form, stood us a Lucullan banquet to celebrate the occasion, which defeated even that renowned trencherman Signals, while Wally was found next morning chewing the north-west end of his carpet, having drunk his bath-water and disposed of his bedding (thus Victor).

However, he and I returned intact last night and are well on the way to recovery.

26th.—Complete quiet reigns here. A large number of the officers and men are on leave and the rest engaged in battalion training.

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Our M.G. Company has been taken away from us and formed into a company of the Divisional M.G. Battalion. It seems likely that when we reach France we shall lose a battalion from the Brigade as well, as only three battalions are taking their animals overseas.

27*th.*—We entrain for Alexandria to-morrow evening and go straight on board for Marseilles. Everyone came back from Cairo yesterday, including the General, who inspected the battalions and Trench Mortar Battery in marching order this morning.

I inspected the Brigade H.Q. party myself after lunch, always a motley throng and attired each man after his own sweet fancy.

The outstanding feature of these parades is the General's servant, Pte. Sullivan, who never fails to achieve the appearance when in full war paint of the hind legs of a pantomime donkey.

28*th.*—The Brigade entrained in the evening and we spent a night of complete discomfort wedged like sardines into an unclean compartment in absolute darkness.

By a special dispensation of providence we had previously detailed Frank Beavan, lately rejoined, to take the General to lunch in Cairo and on to Alexandria in a sleeper, so we were spared his comments on the situation.

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Our train, containing also the K.S.L.I., reached Gabbari quays at five o'clock in the morning and by eight, having stacked sun-helmets—our last link with Egypt—on the dock, we were embarked on the *Omrah* of the Orient Line.

The rest of the Brigade and other units of the Division arrived during the day and went on to other ships of the convoy, of which we are about the smallest boat with only one battalion and details on board. The officers are very well off, and all the senior ones at any rate have cabins to themselves, but the men are very crowded and the heat down in the troop decks is appalling.

The embarkation went off very peacefully, all the animals having gone on ahead, and the regimental buffoon abstained from falling into the water.

The General, of course, refused to live in the cabin chosen for him with much head-scratching, but as Colonel Lonsdale is O.C. ship and the General has nothing to occupy his mind this was only to be expected.

The ship was towed out into the harbour in the afternoon, and after she had anchored, Victor, Wally, and I paid a final visit to Alexandria in a bumboat that came alongside to hawke cabbages.

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There is a two-funnelled liner in the harbour that was only raised from the bottom yesterday, where she had been for three months, having mysteriously sunk at her moorings during the night, presumably at the hand of the gentle Hun.

30th.—The morning's pastime consisted of boat-drill and issuing life-belts. They will not let you wear a Gieve waistcoat now, the things you blow up like a football, owing to the fact that when the ill-famed *Aragon* was torpedoed the fellows with fancy waistcoats, in sliding down her sides got them punctured on the broken bottles still adhering to her from her sojourn at the Dardanelles.

The rest of the convoy were towed out into the harbour at intervals, and we were covered with the smoke and smuts of numerous ships all raising steam at once.

May 1st.—The convoy sailed at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, seven large transports carrying the Division and a swarm of torpedo and patrol boats escorting us, assisted by seaplanes and a sausage balloon towed by a monitor.

Our last glimpse of Egypt was the palm-covered promontory of sand running out to the old fort at Agame. I think every one was sorry to say good-bye to the country. Egypt consists

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of the Desert, the Nile, and the Sun, but it has an extraordinary fascination and holds one's interest as heaps of places with much more variety of scenery quite fail to do.

There and in Palestine there has scarcely been a dull moment and I shall always look back on Cairo, Upper Egypt and the Canal as old friends to be visited again if possible, and retain a happy memory of Gaza, Beersheba, and the Jerusalem hills as having provided the most interesting fighting and the most free and unspoiled surroundings I have come across.

The only good point in leaving them is that I shall no longer feel called upon to keep this diary, which has been the bane of my existence for more than a year.

It closes herewith.

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